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SRIKRISHNA
HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS



KRISHNA



KRISHNA AS A SPORTER





KRISHNA AS A CHARIOTEER

SRIKRISHNA
HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

BY

DHIRENDRA NATH PAL

Author of the History of the Hindu Religion etc., etc

FOURTH EDITION

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MOST RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

WITH

Her Highness's Gracious Permission

TO

Her Highness the Maharani-Regent

OF

MYSORE, C.I.

BY

Her Highness's Humble Servant

THE AUTHOR

GRATITUDE

My thanks are due to those great scholars and writers whose works I have consulted and from whose works I have derived a considerable help. I have consulted about one thousand works, therefore it would be a long list to name them all. It would be also invidious to mention some and leave others. I, therefore, tender my best thanks to one and all of them, though I do not mention them each by name. Without their most valuable help, it would have been impossible for me to write this work. India and India's people will ever remain deeply indebted to these great men.

THE AUTHOR

SRIKRISHNA

PROLOGUE

It is due to the very kind encouragement that my countrymen and many eminent European gentlemen were pleased to extend towards my work that I have been able so soon to bring out a Second Edition.

I have a word to say about the spelling of the proper names and Sanskrit words used in this work. In fact no universal standard of orthography exists in spelling Sanskrit words. They are spelt differently by different oriental scholars. As this work is intended for the people, I have spelt the words in a way as it would be easy for them to pronounce. I know the proper way of putting the name of the subject of my narrative is *Sree Krishna*, but I have made it *Srikrishna* to make it easier to pronounce. I have followed this rule all through this work, and I hope I shall be excused for it by the scholars.

I place the Second Edition of my humble work before the public with the hope that it will receive from them the same generous reception as they were so kind to bestow upon its First Edition.

CALCUTTA, }
August, 1901. }

PREFATORY NOTE

PART I

THIS little work is an humble attempt to write an account of the life and career of Srikrishna on an historical basis. He is on the one hand worshipped and adored by millions of men as an Incarnation of God, while on the other he is considered by the great oriental scholars of Europe to be a myth,—a creation of poesy. None has been ever so misunderstood or misjudged. The greatest of all men ever born is now made to appear in a thousand and one light, for hundreds of poets have painted him, as each of them believed him to be. Thus the world has been deprived of knowing one whose wonderful career and more wonderful teachings should be read, studied and followed by the entire human race.

The account of his life and career now lies buried in a mass of ancient Sanskrit literature. Though some eminent scholars of Europe have explored this vast sea of the Hindu lore and embodied their thought in works of great merit, researches and scholarship, yet they are but little

read by the general public. They remain confined exclusively to the scholars and students. It is for the first time that an humble attempt has been made in this little work to paint Krishna as he really was and to place him before the modern world in its reigning language and in as popular a form as possible. We do not know how far we have been able to attain success, but we sincerely hope we shall be favoured with a patient hearing, and shall not be denied the kind patronage of the generous public.

PART II

IN placing the second Part of my humble work before the public, I have very little to say except that I sincerely hope they will kindly peruse this little book. India's greatest Man and God is Srikrishna :—India's greatest Religion and Faith is Srikrishna :—nay Srikrishna is the Loftiest Ideal of the world ; He is the greatest source of Universal Brotherhood and Ever-lasting Felicity. Therefore I earnestly and most sincerely ask all my readers to put aside their preconceived misconceptions and prejudices and read this humble work.

I humbly beg to state that I have written nothing in this book that is my own, nor have I created a new Krishna out of my fancy. I have humbly tried to unearth the great Krishna who now lies buried under a mass of fiction with which the Puranas and the Mahavarata have been filled up by subsequent writers in the course of many hundreds of years. By putting the searching light of history, analysis and logic, it would not be difficult for any of my readers, if they care to wade through the great sea of the Sanskrit lore, to find out which portions of it are fictions and stories and which are after-interpolations. Krishna, as delineated in this little book, I humbly believe, is Krishna of the original Puranas and the Mahavarata, and Krishna as he really was. Let not my readers form hasty conclusions; let them study the great life and career of the most wonderful Man,—if man could possibly rise to be so high,—of the world with all seriousness, with all attention and care, with all devotion; let them try to appreciate and grasp and feel the inconceivable character of Srikrishna, and I have not the least doubt they would cry as did Arjuna on the holy field of Kurukshetra.

" My salutation to you in front ; my salutation to you from behind, my salutation to you from every side. You are immeasurable, you are inconceivable ; you are all."

I tender my best thanks to all those great scholars and literary men who have so kindly encouraged me by their flattering letters. My best thanks are also due to those of my eminent countrymen and great Englishmen who have kindly purchased copies of my work.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BEFORE we ask our readers to go through these pages, we believe we are Preliminary bound to answer the following queries.

1. *Is Srikrishna a historical personage ?*
2. *If so, when was he born ?*
3. *Are there any adequate materials out of which an account of his life and career may be written on an historical basis ?*
4. *If so, what are they ?*

Innumerable works have been written on the life and teachings of Srikrishna in the various languages of India, but they are all works of poesy and fiction. No attempt has hitherto been made to write his life and career on a really historical basis. Poets have painted him as they believed him to be. None has ever taken the trouble to find out what he really was by diving deep into the mass of fictions underneath which he now lies buried. Therefore in writing a biography of Srikrishna, we have to face a difficulty which is perhaps too great to overcome. On the one hand,

our orthodox countrymen believe in every word that is written in those ancient Sanskrit works in which his life and career are narrated,—and on the other, those great Oriental scholars of Europe who have explored the vast sea of Sanskrit literature declare that Krishna is but a myth, or at the most, the story of his life is but an allegory. We shall not enter into a controversy. It is very difficult to come to any definite conclusions in matters of the remotest antiquity. We shall, therefore, place simply some facts before our readers, asking them to form their own opinion. But we most earnestly request them to peruse these pages in an impartial spirit, being neither driven to any definite conclusions by the glare of the Oriental scholarship of Europe, nor being too prejudiced to believe that all that is written in Sanskrit is but truth.

We shall undertake in this work to dig up the grand statue of a great personage, that has, in the course of many thousands of years, been buried deep underneath the earth. We are happy to say that our task is not hopeless. We shall be able to place before our readers a really historical account of the life and teachings of Srikrishna,

whom we believe to be the Greatest and the Grandest Man that was ever born in this world.

There are at least ten thousand works in the various Indian languages that contain the story of Srikrishna, either in songs and sonnets, or in poems and dramas. But we can very well pass them by, and come to those very ancient works from which their authors have got their inspiration. They are: (1) the *Mahavarata*, (2) the *Harivansa*, and (3) the *Puranas*.

THE Puranas are a stupendous mass of literature.

The Puranas The following eighteen are supposed to be the chief Puranas,
 (1) Vishnu, (2) Vagavata, (3) Narada, (4) Gadura,
 (5) Padma, (6) Baraha, (7) Brahma, (8) Brahmanda,
 (9) Brahma-Vaivarta, (10) Markendeya,
 (11) Bhavishya, (12) Vamana, (13) Vayu,
 (14) Linga, (15) Skanda, (16) Agni, (17) Matsya,
 and (18) Kurma.

Besides these eighteen chief Puranas, there are more than twenty-six Upa-Puranas, such as :—
 (1) Sanatkumara, (2) Nrisinha, (3) Brihat-Naradiya,
 (4) Siva, (5) Durvasa, (6) Kapila, (7) Manava,
 (8) Aisanas, (9) Varuna, (10) Kalika, (11) Samvava,

(12) Nandi, (13) Soura, (14) Parasara, (15) Aditya, (16) Maheswara, (17) Vargava, (18) Vasista, (19) Vavishya, (20) Bramhandiya, (21) Kourma, (22) Adi, (23) Mudgala, (24) Kalki, (25) Vavishattara, (26) Vrihadharma, and so on.

If all these Puranas and Upa-puranas are collected and printed, they would be many cart-loads of printed matter. But it is the universal belief in India that the chief eighteen Puranas, if not all the Upa-Puranas, were written by the great sage Vyasa who compiled the Vedas. The following *Slokas*, quoted at random from some of the Puranas, will show that such contradictory statements cannot be made by one and the same person.

Padma Purana, Uttara Khanda, 78th Chapter, says:—

"He who, out of ignorance, worships any other god except Vishnu, becomes a wretch. It is not proper to adore any other except Vishnu. The ignorant Brahman who takes but once the remnants of the offerings to Siva becomes a Chandala. He is burnt in hell for eternity."

But Kurma Purana, 20th Chapter, says:—

"He who abuses Siva destroys his Dhyana and Homa, Knowledge and Sacrifice."

In Linga Purana, Chapter 17th, Sloka 3, Siva says:—

“This Grand-sire of all creatures, Brahma, was born of my right side, and this Soul of the universe, Vishnu, rose from my left side.”

But Vishnu Purana, Part I., Chapter 7th, Sloka 10, says :—

“Rudra (Siva), as effulgent as the mid-day sun, was produced from his (Brahma's) forehead, having been blazed up in the fire of his anger.”

So far as regards the Puranas being written by one person.

And again the Puranas that we now possess are not exactly those that were extant at least before the sixth century A. D., when the great lexicographer, Amara Sinha, the contemporary of Kalidasa, flourished.* He says in his great Dictionary,—“The Puranas have five Characteristics.”

* See Asiatic Researches, Vol. I., pp. 286-87, and Col. A. Cunningham's Archæological Survey Report, published in the Supplementary Number of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1863, pp. VII-X.

His commentators thus define these five Characteristics :—

“The creation, the special creation, the histories of families, the accounts of different ages, and the stories of great men,—these are the five Characteristics of the Puranas.”

But except Vishnu Purana, none of the present Puranas have these five Characteristics.

In the Matsya Purana, we get the following description of Brahma-Vaivarta Purana :—

“The Purana, which is recited before Narada by Savarni and which contains the glory of Krishna, the accounts of Rathanlara Kalpa, and the story of Brahma Varaha in eighteen thousand slokas, is called Brahma-Vaivarta.”

But the present Brahma-Vaivarta Purana does not contain the accounts of the *Rathanlara Kalpa*, or the story of *Brahma Varaha*. Besides, it does not contain any mention of its being recited by Savarni before Narada. Thus it is quite evident that the old Brahma-Vaivarta is lost, and it has been replaced by the present one.

In this way we find the present puranas are all but collections of the ancient records which have passed through many additions and alterations in the course of many hundreds of years. The “Purana” has been in existence in India from the

earliest days ; but it is now lying buried under the present great mass of literature which goes by its name. It would, therefore, be useless to attempt to fix the age of any of the present Puranas ; for they have been collected and re-collected, added and interpolated, through many hundreds of years down to the very recent days.*

Extracts from some of the most ancient Sanskrit works would show that Puranas and Histories were extant in India even in the Vedic age. In the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishadas, Kalpa Sutras, and Manu Sanhita, we meet with the names of both the Purana and the Itihasa (history). We shall make some quotations.

The Atharva Veda, 15-16, says :—

" Itihasa, Purana, Gatha, and others &c."

Satapata Brahmana, 14-6, 10-6, says :—

" The Rig-Veda, Yayur-Veda, Sama-Veda, Atharva-Veda Itihasa, Purana, Upanishadas. Sutras, Slokas, their Explanations &c."

Taitariya Aranyaka, 2-9, says :—

" The Veda, Itihasa, Purana, Gatha &c."

* We have been, therefore, unable to accept the dates fixed for these works by some of the Oriental scholars of Europe.

Chhandyga Upanishad, 7th Baitaka, says :—

"He said, 'O Exalted One, I am acquainted with the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and the fourth, Atharva Veda, and the fifth, Itihasa (history) and Purana.'"

Manu Sanhita, Chapter III., Sloka 232, says :—

"In Sraddh ceremonies, the Sastras called the Vedas, the Sanhitas, the Stories, the Histories, the Puranas and the Khilas should be recited to others."

We need not say that the Vedas are the earliest works ; then follow the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishadas, and the Manu Sanhita respectively.*

It is mentioned in the present Puranas that originally there was but one Purana. Vishnu Purana, Part III., Chapter VI., Slokas 16-19, says :—

"Veda Vyasa, learned in the Puranas, compiled a Purana Sanhita with Akhyana, Upakhyana, Gatha, and Kalpasutras. He then gave it to his celebrated disciple, Lomaharsana, who was born in the Suta caste. He had six pupils, namely Sumati, Agnibarcha, Mitrayu, Sansapayana, Akritavarna, and Savarni. Amongst them Kashyapa, Savarni, and Sansapayana, each wrote one Purana sanhita, but the Sanhita called Lomaharsanika, which Lomaharsana wrote, was the source of all of them."

* See Professor Max Muller's History of the Ancient Sanskrit Literature.

The Vagavata also in its 4-6 Slokas, Chapter III., Skanda X, says :—

“Aruni, Kashyapa, Savarni, Akritavarna, Sansapayana, and Harita are the six Pauranikas (learned in the Puranas). They learnt the Purana from my father who was the pupil of Vyasa. After studying the original (Purana) Sanhita, they each wrote a separate (Purana) Sanhita &c.”

The great commentator of the Vagavata, Sridhara Swami, in commenting on its 6th Sloka of the 7th Chapter, 12th Skanda, says :—

“At first Vyasa wrote six Sanhitas, and taught them to my father, Lomaharsana. From him Aruni and others learnt each one Sanhita. I am their pupil ; from me Rurba has learnt them.”

Agni Purana also says :—

“The Suta Lomaharsana received the Purana from Vyasa. Sumati, Agnibarcha, Mitraya, Sansapayana, Sritaxrata, and Savarni became his pupils. Sansapayana and others wrote the Purana Sanhitas.”

Thus we find Vyasa wrote only one Purana, and his pupils after him wrote several other works based on it.

But what subjects did this original Purana treat of? The 16th Sloka of the Nature of the Original Puranas Vishnu Purana, Part III., Chapter VI., fully explains it.

It says :—

“Vyasa, learned in the Vedas, wrote a Purana Sanhita with Akhyana, Upakhyana, Gatha, and Kalpasuddhi.”

The commentator of the Vishnu Purana thus explains these four subjects,—

“What is seen with one's own eyes is called Akhyana by the learned men; what is heard from different persons is called Upakhyana; songs about the ancestors are called Gatha; and the treatment of the Sradh ceremony is called Kalpasuddhi.”

We shall presently show that the original Purana, written by Vyasa, and the subsequent six Puranas, written by his disciples, dwelt on the four subjects named above. The accounts of eye witnesses (*Akhyana*), and contemporary histories (*Upakhyana*) were their two main features.

The following extracts would show that in ancient India there was a class of men, called *Sutas*, whose profession was to recite the Puranas and the Histories. They had also another calling, namely that of the charioteership of kings and

princes. The Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda, 15th Sarga, 19th Sloka, says :—

“ Having said this, Sumantra (the charioteer of king Dasaratha), learned in the Puranas, came to the door, and by that ever-closed door entered the room.”

The commentator of the Ramayana explains Sutas as “ men learned in the Puranas.”

The Mahavarata, Adi Parva, 40th Chapter, 6th Sloka, says :—

“ I have heard all that you have narrated. Now I wish to hear how Astika was born. Hearing his (these) words, the Suta began to narrate the story.”

The Vagavata, 1st Skanda, 4th Chapter, 2nd Sloka, says :—

“ O Suta, you are highly blessed ; you are the foremost of all great speakers. Relate to us the holy story of the Vagavata which was narrated by the blessed Suka.”

The Kurma Purana, 12th Chapter, Slokas, 28-29, says :—

“ Those Sutas, that were born in my family, had not the right to study the Vedas. At the command of the Lord, they carried on the profession of reciting the Puranas.”

The Vishnu Purana, Part I., Chapter 13th, Slokas 50-53, says :—

"All the auspicious Sacrifices which were performed (at the birth of Prithu) and which were presided over by the Grand sire, the highly intelligent Suta was produced from the Soma plant. And in that great Sacrifice, the highly intelligent Magadha was also born. Thereupon the Rishi thus addressed Magadha and Suta :—'Sing the glory of the mighty king Prithu, the son of Vena. This is your special function, and he too is the fit object of your praise.'"

The Brahma Purana says :—

"All the Rishis said, 'Sing the glory of these kings.' Being appointed by them in this good work, I (Suta) sang his (Prithu's) glory."

From the preceding facts we are now justified in arriving at the following conclusions, namely :—

1. Even from the Vedic age there was a class of men amongst the Aryans who were called the *Sutas*.

2. Their profession was to recite the glories of kings, to narrate the histories of royal families, and to relate the life and career of great men,

invariably gathered from eye-witnesses and contemporary chroniclers.

3. These narratives were known by the names of the *Puranas*, and the *Itihasas* (histories). Originally there were only six such *Puranas*, written by the six disciples of Vyasa who wrote the Original *Purana Sanhita*.

4. The present *Puranas* are a mass of collected records on various subjects. In them have been incorporated the old *Puranas* and *Itihasas*. The histories of the royal families and great men of ancient India, therefore, now lie buried in this mass of fictions. But they still exist, and they might be restored.

THE story of Krishna is told in the *Puranas*, but not in all of them. We find
 The story of Krishna it in the Vishnu Purana, Brahma
 Krishna Purana, Vagavata Purana,
 Brahma-vaivarta Purana, Skanda Purana, Bamana
 Purana, and Kurma Purana. Except Vishnu
 Purana, Brahma Purana, Vagavata Purana, and
 Brahma-Vaivarta Purana, the story of Krishna is
 very briefly told in the other *Puranas*, and their
 accounts in no way differ from those given in the
 first four *Puranas* named above. Therefore we
 leave them out of our consideration.

We have already said that the original Brahma-Vaivarta Purana is lost. The accounts of Krishna that the present Brahma-Vaivarta gives differ so very much from those given by the other Puranas that we can easily reject them as being a modern creation of some enthusiastic religious scholar, who saw Krishna in his own imagination as one who was the embodiment of divine love in sensuality.

The Vagavata is a work written many hundred years after the Vishnu Purana. Some say that it was written by Bopadeva, who flourished in the 13th century A.D. It is apparent that there was a great quarrel over this Purana between the Vaisnava (the worshippers of Vishnu) and the Saktas (the worshippers of Sakti). As the Vaisnavas have the Vagavata Purana of their own, so have the Saktas theirs. Each sect deems its own Purana as being one of the chief eighteen mentioned above. The great commentator of the Vagavata Purana, Sridhara Swami, was fully cognisant of the serious doubts that the people entertained about the Purana he commentated upon. Therefore he, at the very outset, said :—

"None should doubt that there is any other Purana called the Vagavata."

When this quarrel over the Vagavata was going on, many works were written. One of them was called :—

A slap on the face of the wicked.

Another was called :—

A great slap on the face of the wicked :—

The reply to these works was called :—

*A beating of the shoe on the face of the wicked.**

All this clearly indicates that the Vagavata is a subsequent Purana. The story of Krishna as given in it is, therefore, based upon some other older Puranas.

The account of Krishna that Brahma Purana and Vishnu Purana give is word for word the same. It is not possible,—and neither such plagiarism is met with in the Sanskrit literature,—that either of the two has bodily copied twenty-six long chapters from the other. It is quite apparent, therefore, that both the Vishnu Purana and Brahma Purana have quoted these twenty-six chapters narrating the career of Krishna from some other older work.

* See Wilson's Translation of Vishnu Purana, Preface.

But before we discuss the Vishnu Purana, we must take into our consideration another work which, though not included amongst the Puranas, is in no way different from any of them. This work is called *Harivansa*. It is a later work than the Vishnu Purana, and the story of Krishna that it gives is apparently borrowed from it. The reason for our saying this will be apparent from our notes later on. Evolution is a law of Nature. Even in literature we find that things gradually expand in subsequent descriptions. If our readers take the trouble to go through the Vishnu Purana and Harivansa carefully, they will find that the descriptions of things in the Vishnu Purana are all expanded in the Harivansa. In the Vishnu Purana, Putana is only a child-killer, but in Harivansa she is a demoness. It claims to be an Appendix to the Mahavarata, but we agree with H. H. Wilson in saying, "Its internal evidence is strongly indicative of a date considerably subsequent to that of the major portion of the Mahavarata."*

* H. H. Wilson's *Essays, Analytical, Critical, and Philosophical, on subjects connected with the Sanskrit Literature*, Vol. I.

The Vishnu Purana narrates only the early life, and a scattered account of the later life, of Krishna. It contains that which is not narrated in the Mahavarata. We cannot say,—and we have not the least chance of finding it out,—when this story of the Vishnu Purana was originally written. We have already said that all the Puranas have gone through a process of additions and alterations in the course of many hundreds of years, and the Vishnu Purana is no exception. We find in it matters of so recent a date as that of the 10th century, A. D. But we cannot, therefore, say that this work does not date any period earlier than the 10th century,* and that the whole of this Purana was written in or about this century. The internal evidence strongly indicates a much earlier date.

But we have to do only with the story of Krishna, and we shall be able to show that the story as told by the Vishnu Purana, and also by

* See Asiatic Researches, Vol. XVII., Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. III., pp. 262 and 330, Vol. VI, pp. 1-17, 434-458 and 970-980 ; Vol. VII., pp. 37 and 634 ; *Ariana Antiqua* by H. H. Wilson, pp. 419, 422, 425, 427, also Wilson's Vishnu Purana.

the Mahavarata, was extant in India in the 10th century B. C., instead of the 10th century A. D.

The Mahavarata is most erroneously considered to be an *Epic* poem.* It does not possess even one characteristic of an Epic poem. It is not a poem at all. Almost all Sanskrit works, such as those on Grammar, Philosophy, Pathology, Astronomy, Mathematics, are written in verse. Surely none of them is a poem. The Mahavarata was originally a history—an *Akhyana*—a contemporary chronicle. The present Mahavarata itself says in the Adi-Parva, Chapter 1st, Sloka 20 :—

“We desire to hear Bharata, the sacred history that drives away all fear.”

And again in Sloka 26 :—

“Some bards have already sung this history.”

And again in Sloka 55 :—

“The son of Satyawati (Vyasa), by penances and meditation having classified the ever-lasting Veda, composed this only history.”

It is even now called an *Itihasa* (history) by all of our Sanskrit scholars.

* By many Oriental scholars.

This is the definition of "history" given by the Sanskrit Lexicographers.

"The accounts of the Past that contain instructions on Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha are called the histories."

In its present form the Mahavarata is neither an Epic poem nor a history. It is almost like any of the other Puranas,—a mass of collected records on various subjects written in the course of many hundreds of years. A cursory view of it would show that it holds in its capacious bulk many independent works, such as the Bhagavata Gita, Anu Gita, Sanatsu Gita, Markandeya Samashya, and so forth. The present Mahavarata itself says in the Adi Parva,—

"Vyasa originally compiled the Bharata, exclusive of Episodes, in twenty-four thousand Slokas. This much only is called by the learned as the real Bharata. He subsequently composed an Epitome in one hundred and fifty verses."

But the present Mahavarata contains instead of twenty-four thousand Slokas, no less than 107,390 Slokas. It contains a Table of Contents, instead of 150 Slokas, of no less than 268 Slokas. This is a clear indication that many thousand Slokas

have been added to the original Mahavarata in the course of many thousand years.

The present Mahavarata is told by a certain nameless man. This is a translation of its first two Slokas :—

“One day when the great sages of hard austerities, who had been present at the twelve years’ Sacrifice of Kulapati Saunika, were comfortably seated in the Naimisha forest, Rishi Lomaharsana’s son, Ugrasrava, popularly known as the son of a Suta, well-versed in the Puranas, came to them in all humility.”

The nameless gentleman who recites these two Slokas goes on to say that Ugrasrava Souti at the request of the Rishis then began to recite the Mahavarata, which was originally composed by Vyasa and narrated by Vaisampayana at the Snake-Sacrifice of Janamejaya.

Thus we find when it was recited in the Naimisha forest before the Rishis, even then it has come down to the fourth generation ;—(1) Vyasa, who taught it to (2) Vaisampayana, who taught it to (3) Lomaharsana, who taught it to his son (4) Ugrasrava. But even this Mahavarata we do not possess. The present one is told by some

nameless person who recites what Ugrasrava narrated. When it was recited by Ugrasrava in the Naimisha forest, it had even then gone through some additions and alterations, and a difference of opinion had already arisen about the various readings of its Text. *Adi Parva*, Chapter I., Sloka 53 says :—

“Some read the Bharata from the first Mantra, some from the story of Astika, some again from Uparichara, while some Brahmans read the whole!”

Ugrasrava himself says in the *Adi Parva*, Chapter I., Sloka 3, that he knows only eight thousand and eight hundred *Slokas*, but the *Mahavarata* that we now possess contains more than a *lakh* of *Slokas*.

It is thus quite apparent that the works, such as the *Mahavarata* and the *Puranas*, were made the vehicles by various enthusiastic writers of different cults at different times to promulgate their own dogmas and doctrines. They became thus the store-houses of writings of all sorts of men of all shades of opinions,—nay of any and everyone who thought that he had written something clever. From big books to single couplets,

everything was thrust into them by every sort and grade of men who desired to publish their compositions and to secure for them a wide circle of readers.

THE story of Krishna is narrated in the Mahavarata not as it is in the Krishna in the Vishnu Purana. He is seen in the Mahavarata only when he comes in contact with the Kurus and the Pandavas. It is quite natural that such should be the case. The Mahavarata is the history of the Kuru-Pandavas. It was originally recited at the command of Janamejaya who was the great grandson of the Pandavas. It was purposely composed to recite the glory of the Kuru-Pandavas, to relate the history of the Pandava heroes, and to narrate the great battle that was fought by them on the field of Kurukshetra. In such a work the life and career of Krishna are not to be expected to be written in full. He is seen in this work only in those places where he comes in contact with the men whose history the work is.

When, however, in the course of years he came to be known as one of the great men that the world has ever produced, then attempts were

made to fill up the gap in the account of his life and career which was met with in the Mahavarata. In the Harivansa, Chapter I, we find it is mentioned that Janamejaya, after hearing the Mahavarata desired to hear the story of Krishna's early life. It is said that Vaisampayana then began to recite the Harivansa. The Vagavata distinctly says that Harivansa was written to fill up the gap in the story of Krishna which was found in the Mahavarata. Though there is no such mention made in the Vishnu Purana, yet seeing the way in which it has narrated his life and career, we can easily find that its account is also an attempt to fill up the gap left vacant by the Mahavarata. It has not narrated anything that is already in the Mahavarata ; it has narrated only his early career—that which is not to be found in the great work.

We thus meet with the story of Krishna's life chiefly in the two most ancient Sanskrit works, namely the Mahavarata and Vishnu Purana. The one narrates his early life and the other his later life. But both of them in their present forms are compilations of old stories, annals, and histories. They were compiled many hundreds of years after the birth of Krishna. They have, therefore, in

their present shape little or no historical value. But we shall presently show that the story of Krishna was extant in India many hundred years before the *present* Mahavarata came into existence. If we can show this, it would then be clear that the original story of Krishna's life, which we shall prove to have been written by a contemporary chronicler, namely Rishi Vyasa, was taken bodily into the present Mahavarata, and then added and interpolated, till at last it almost disappeared in a sea of annals, legends, and fictions.

LET us now see how long the story of Krishna's life and the story of the Mahavarata have been extant in India.

Antiquity of the story
of Krishna

In many of the inscriptions that have been discovered and deciphered, the story of Krishna is distinctly mentioned. In a Siva's temple in a place called Iballi in Dharwar, the great battle of Kurukshetra has been distinctly mentioned.* This inscription says it was made 3730 years after the great battle, but it is also written that it was made

* See Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. IV., pp. 376 and 377., Vol. V., p. 725, VI., p. 88, Journal. Royal A. S. New Series, 1856, Vol. I, part 2, p. 273.

in the 506th *Sakabda* which corresponds with 584 A. D.*

In the copper plates of the Gurjar kings, dated the 4th century A. D., the following line occurs.

“Produced with Lakshmi and placed on the breast of Krishna, it was like the Kaustava gem.”

In another plate, dated the 2nd century A. D., the name of Krishna is thus mentioned.†

“O Krishna the Abode of Rest.”

In a mountain cave near Nassik, there is an inscription, dated the 1st century A. D. The following line occurs in it.‡

“As mighty as Rama, Krishna, Arjuna and Bhimasena.”

In the ninth century A. D., the celebrated work, *Sankara Bijaya*, was written.§ In one

* See the Journal of the Bombay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. IX., p. 315.

† See Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1854, pp 57-58.

‡ See Journal, Bombay Branch of the R. A. S. Vol. V., p. 41.

§ Many Oriental Scholars of both this country and Europe have fixed the age of almost all the Sanskrit works. But there are differences of opinion amongst them. We have accepted the opinions of only those with whom we have been able to agree. For fear of making this *Introduction* tedious, we have not dwelt on them. We have given the dates which appeared to us reliable and approximately

place it distinctly mentions the names of both Rama and Krishna and calls them Incarnations of Gods.

Between the 6th and 7th century A. D., *Vasavadatta* was written.* In one place it says :—

“ Harivansa in which the charming account of Puskara is given.”

This distinctly refers to the “ Harivansa,”—the work which we have already mentioned. In many places of this celebrated work, the names of Krishna, Arjuna, Bhima, and others are mentioned.

The great poet Kalidas flourished between the 4th and 6th century A. D.† He writes in his celebrated poem *Meghaduta* :—

“ The rainbow appears from the top of the yonder ant-hill like a collected mass of brilliancy of gems. As Vishnu in his Gopa (cow-herd) form is adorned with the brilliant peacock’s plumes, so

correct, but we have mentioned in the foot notes the works that support our views.

* See F. E. Hall’s Preface to *Vasavadatta*, 1859. pp., 11-17 and 51-52 ; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1862, and *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1851, pp. 203-210.

† Weber’s *History of the Indian Literature*, 1878, p. 195.

will your black body be exceedingly beautified by that rainbow."

Between the 2nd and the 3rd century A. D., *Mrichhakatika* was written.* In it we meet with the names of Dhritarashtra, Yudhishtira, and the Pandavas.

In the 2nd century B. C.† Patanjali wrote the *Vasya* of the great grammar of Panini. We find in his work the story of Krishna's life prominently mentioned Patanjali's Note on Panini, 3-1-26, says :—

"In describing the slaughter of Kansa—Kansa ghadhayati—is proper."

Note on Panini 3-2-11.

"Vasudeva surely killed Kansa."

Note on Panini 2-3-36.

"Krishna was ill-disposed towards his maternal uncle (Kansa)."

* See Wilson's Theatre of the Hindus, Vol. I. and also his *Ariana Antiqua*, p. 364.

† See Goldstucker's Preface to Manava Kalpa Sutra, pp. 229-235, Dr. Bhandarkar in the Indian Antiquary for Oct. 1872, pp. 299-302., Ibid, August, 1877, pp. 241-251., Ibid, Dec. 1876, pp. 350-354., Ibid, Oct., 1877, pp. 301-307. See also Kielhorn's Essays on Katyana and Patanjali.

Note on Panini 2-2-23.

"Let the strength of Krishna increase with Sankersana, Balarama, his brother."

Note on Panini 3-2-118.

"The Kurus fought a righteous battle."

Katyana, the celebrated author of *Kalpa Sutra*, flourished in the 4th century B. C.* He wrote a *Bartika* (explanatory notes) on Panini. In this work a distinct trace of the story of the Mahavarata is found.

Now Ashwalayana, the author of *Grihyasutra*, was born some centuries before Katyana. He too has mentioned the Mahavarata in his work. *Grihyasutra*, 3-4, says :—

"Let Sumanta, Jaimini, Vaisampayana, Paila, Sutravashya Varata-Dharmacharjas, and all other Acharjas be gratified."

In the fourth century B. C., Megasthenes was in India. He has left behind him a record of what he saw in this country. He speaks of a Hindu god, the description of whom does not fit any other Hindu god except Krishna.†

* See Kielhorn's Essay on Katyana and Patanjali.

† See Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arian by J. W. MacCrindle, 1877, pp. 39, 178, 201, 203.

In the fifth century B. C., Buddhism spread all over India, and the life of Buddha, the celebrated Buddhistic work, *Lalita Vistara*, was written.* In the 11th Chapter of this very ancient work, the name of Krishna is distinctly mentioned.

The Upanishadas are still earlier works. They were written long before Buddha was born. But in one of the oldest Upanishada, the name of Krishna is distinctly mentioned.

Chhandogya-Upanishada, 3rd Propataka, 17th part, says :—

“ *Saying all this (Rishi) Ghora of the race of Angirasha then spoke thus to Devaki’s son, Krishna :—‘ Take to these three things at the end, namely,—you are undeteriorating, ever-lasting, and immortal.’ ”*

The Aranyakas are still earlier works; and again the Brahmanas are still earlier. Max Muller says that the Brahmanas were begun to be written from 1,000 B. C. Martin Haug says that they were begun to be written from the 14th century B. C. In one of the Aranyakas Krishna’s name is distinctly mentioned. In two of the Brahmanas, the names of Parikshit and Janamejaya are

* See Rhys David’s Buddhism.

mentioned.* They were the grandson and great-grandson of the Pandavas.

The earlier work than any of these is perhaps Panini's great Grammar. Professor Goldstucker has proved Panini's age beyond all doubts.† We can safely say that Panini flourished before the 12th and 13th century B. C. Even then the story of Krishna's life was extant, and he was held in high respect. The complete original story of the Mahavarata was well known in Panini's time.‡

Finding in Panini that Krishna was already an adorable being and the story of the Mahavarata was already an old story when that great Grammarian flourished, we can reasonably suppose that the story then extant was written at least a hundred, or hundred and fifty years before he was born, *i. e.* it was written in the 15th or the 16th century B. C.

* Aitariya Brahmana, Panjika 8-21., Satapatha Brahmana, 13-5-4-1, Taitariya Aranyaka, 10-6-6.

† See Goldstucker's Panini.

‡ See Panini 8-3-95. Panini 4-1-176. Panini 4-3-98.

WE shall presently show that battle of Kurukshetra was fought in the 15th or the 16th century B. C. Under the circumstances it is quite evident that the story of the Mahavarata was writtern immediately after that great battle. Would it be now very wrong to infer that it was really written by Vyasa who was a contemporary of the Pandavas ?

The story of Krishna written by a contemporary

We have nothing to disbelieve the fact that the story of the Mahavarata was recited before King Janamejaya who was the great-grandson of the Pandavas. We can quote innumerable instances from the Sanskrit literature to prove that the accounts of the royal families and great men of ancient India were written at the command of their descendants, and they were as a matter of custom recited by the *Sutas* at the Sacrifices in which the kings and the princes whiled away their time by listening to them. It is therefore quite natural that Janamejaya should like to hear the history of his forefathers from Vaisampayana, who himself says that he learnt the account from his preceptor, Vyasa.

If this be the case, the theory that the story is an allegory, or that the Pandavas and Krishna are

but after-additions, falls to the ground.* We have seen Panini mentions the name of both Arjuna and Krishna. We can find nothing in the history of the period between the battle of Kurukshetra and the birth of Panini to lead us to believe that Arjuna and Krishna had been subsequently added to the story of the Mahavarata. It was impossible to make such radical changes in such a popular work as the Mahavarata. The whole story of the Mahavarata stands on Arjuna and Krishna. Janamejaya who caused the story to be recited was the great-grandson of Arjuna and great-grand-nephew of Krishna, for Krishna was the brother of his great-grandmother. The descendants of Krishna and Arjuna ruled in India for many hundred years. If Janamejaya and Parikshit be historical personages, Arjuna and Krishna can by no means be myths, for there is no proof that they were not descended from Arjuna and Subhadra, and that Subhadra was not Krishna's sister. All other characters in the original story of the Mahavarata may be expunged, but Krishna and

* Lassen calls it an allegory and attempts to explain it. Weber on the other hand says that the Pandavas and Krishna are after-additions.

Arjuna can by no means be displaced, for if they are removed, the whole story falls to the ground.

THE opinion of the Oriental scholars is that the

The battle of
Kurukshetra

battle of Kurukshetra was fought
sometime between the 12th and
the 14th century, B. C.,* but we

hope to show that this great battle was fought some
time between the 15th and the 16th century B. C.

Perhaps we shall not have to tell our readers that *Rajatarangini*, the history of Kashmir, is one of the surviving histories that were written in the Sanskrit language. The author of this celebrated work, Kalhana, says that one Gonarda was occupying the throne of Kashmir when Judhisthira was reigning in Kurujangala. He adds that Gonarda ascended the throne in the 653rd year of the Kali (*Yuga*) age and Gonarda reigned for 35 years.

According to *Rajatarangini*, we get about 2400 B. C., as the age of Judhisthira.

Vishnu Purana, Part 4, Chap. 24, Sloka 34, says :—

"The age of Parikshit is after 1200 years of Kali age."

* See some of their opinions in p l.

According to this we get, 1900 years B. C., as the age in which the battle was fought.

In Vishnu Purana, Part 4, Chap. 24 Sloka 30, and Vagavata, Skanda 12, Chap. 2, Sloka 32, we find *Magha* is the 10th constellation from *Purva Ashara* and *Magha* was the constellation at the time of Judhishthira; thus Judhishthira would be one thousand years ahead of Nanda.

Vishnu Purana, Part 4, Chap. 24, Sloka 32, says that Nanda was 100 years ahead of Chandra Gupta, the great Emperor, who was the contemporary of Alexander.

Vishnu Purana, Chap. 24th says :—

“Maha Padma and his descendants will be the lords of earth for one hundred years. The Brahmana named Kautillya will destroy the kings of the Nanda dynasty. In their place the Maurjas will rule over the earth. Kautillya will instal Chandra Gupta on the throne.”

Alexander invaded India in 325 B. C. Chandra Gupta ascended the throne in 315 B. C. According to this, we get Parikshit 1015 years ahead of Nanda, and Nanda 100 years ahead of Chandra Gupta, the total being 1115 years. Add to this 315 years; thus we get 1430 B. C. the age of

Parikshit. The battle was thus fought sometime in the 15th century B. C.

There is another astronomical calculation by which we can fix upon the age of the great battle.

The Vagavata, 12th Skanda, Chapter II. Vayu Purana, 37th Chapter, 412-417, Slokas, and Vishnu Purana, Part IV., Sec. 24, Slokas 33-34, give us an astronomical calculation of the age of Judhishthira, and they are almost all similar. We quote the Vishnu Purana.

“The two Stars amongst the Seven-Rishis (stars), which are seen in the eastern sky, have a star in a direct line to them. The Seven Rishis stay in it for one hundred years. O best of the twice-born, the Seven-Rishis were in Magha at the time when Parikshit was born.”

Though the meaning of these two *Slokas* are very vague, yet some of the Oriental scholars have fixed from them the age of Judhishthira as being sometime between the 15th and 16th century B. C.

We can take the help of another astronomical calculation to fix the age of the battle of Kurukshetra. When Bhishma fell wounded, he said that he would not die in the Southern Solstice

which, according to the notion of that age, was inauspicious to depart from this life. So he patiently waited for the Northern Solstice which took place in the month of *Magha*. He said when dying :—

• “*O gentle Judhisthira, the month of Magha has arrived.*”

It clearly says that when Bhisma died, the Northern Solstice took place in the month of *Magha*. But the Northern Solstice does not now take place in *Magha* ; it takes place on the 7th or the 8th *Pousha* (21st December). We shall not trouble our readers with astronomical calculations, but the result at which we arrive is that the period which intervenes between the present day of the Northern Solstice with that which took place when Bhisma died is about 3246 years. We thus find Bhisma died sometime in the 16th century B. C.

It would be presumptuous on our part to say that we have, after a lapse of about four thousand years, been able to fix the age of Krishna beyond all doubts. But we have placed before our readers some facts from which we can reasonably ask them to accept the theory that he flourished

sometime between the 15th and the 16th century B. C.

We believe we can now very reasonably come to the following conclusions :—

1. That Krishna was born sometime in the 15th and 16th century B. C.

2. That this story of his life was written by one who was his contemporary and who knew him best.

3. That this story now lies buried in two ancient Sanskrit works, namely the Mahavarata and the Vishnu Purana.

Now the question arises,—Is it possible to unearth this original story of Krishna's

The method of restoring the lost story of Krishna

life from underneath the great mass of fictions that cover it?

We are happy to say it is not as difficult a task as it appears at the first sight, and that for the following three reasons, namely,—

1. We have been able to fix the age in which Krishna was born.

2. We have a very clear and faithful account of the political, social and religious condition of India of this particular age in such Sanskrit works as the Veda, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Sutras &c.

3. We have come to learn by the careful study of the Sanskrit literature what religious, social and political changes passed over the Hindu race since the day when Krishna was born.

To restore the original story of Krishna's life from the present Mahavarata and Vishnu Purana, we shall have, therefore, simply to leave out of them the following,—

1. All matters, whether in respect of religion, manners and customs, social and political affairs, or any other matters, that were not in existence in the Vedic age.

We know what was and what was not in existence in that period of the history of the Aryan race. For example we know that in the Vedic age, the Aryans had no such gods as Vishnu, Siva &c. ; they had no caste system as we have now, they had no Brahmanical supremacy, and so forth. Therefore, in finding out the original story of Krishna from within the two works in question, we must go on expunging all matters that have any connection with these gods and with such matters as mentioned above.

2. We know that many religious, social, and political changes passed over the Aryan race long

after the death of Krishna. By careful study of the Sanskrit literature we have been able to know what they and their nature and results were.

In trying to revive the original story of Krishna's life from the Mahavarata and the Vishnu Purana, we must throw away all matters that savour of these changes. For instance, Buddhism flourished in India many hundred years after the birth of Krishna. Therefore, if we find anything in these two works that is apparently the result of Buddhism, we must reject it.

We need not say we shall also reject all foolish fanciful, and poetical descriptions,—all matters based on unnatural and extraordinary miracles,—things with which these works are replete. They are evidently added to these works in order to make them more amusing and interesting to the masses before whom they were used to be recited and sung. Thus using the pruning knife, we shall try to find out the story of Krishna's life which was written by his great contemporary the Sage Vyasa.

We shall base our accounts on the Vishnu Purana and the Mahavarata, though we shall sometime refer to Harivansa and Vagavata and other

Puranas. But as we shall proceed, we shall append critical and elaborate notes to unfold the original story.

General Summary

WE believe we should now summarise the points put forward by us.

1. Even from the Vedic age there was a class of men amongst the Aryans who were called the *Sutas*.

2. Their profession was to recite the glories of kings, to narrate the histories of royal families, and to relate the life and career of great men, invariably gathered from eye-witnesses and contemporary chroniclers.

3. These narratives were known by the names of the *Puranas* and the *Itihasas*.

4. The present *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, however are masses of collected records on various subjects in which have been incorporated the old *Puranas* and *Itihasas*. The histories of royal families and great men of ancient India, therefore, now lie buried in this mass of fictions. But they still exist, and they might be restored.

5. The account of the life and career of Krishna, according to the custom of ancient India, was

written by a contemporary chronicler, namely, the great sage Vyasa.

6. It was originally recited by a *Suta* named Lomaharsana, and then by his son, Ugrasrava, and then by other *Sutas*, and thus it came down from generation to generation.

7. This account of Krishna was incorporated in the original *Puranas* and *Itihasas* which in their turn were incorporated in the mass of literature which now goes by the name of the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*.

8. The most ancient of the present *Puranas* and *Itihasas* are the Mahavarata and Vishnu Purana.

9. These two works contain the original story of Krishna as written by Vyasa.

10. This story was written by a contemporary chronicler, and therefore it has the greatest historical value.

WITH great pains, with laborious study, and with

Conclusion careful analysis of innumerable works, we have made an humble attempt to raise up the buried statue and to rescue the lost history of the Greatest and the Grandest of Men that was ever born in this world,—a Man who was great and perfect in every way,—a man

who was too high to be understood, and therefore universally misunderstood,—a Man who was the most perfect and the highest ideal of the human race,—a Man in whom appeared the Most High out of His infinite kindness for the guidance of his beloved Creation.

We do not exaggerate. We earnestly ask our readers to go through these pages without prejudices and without preconceived misconceptions. We earnestly solicit them to peruse this "Life and Teachings of Srikrishna" with an impartial mind and a devout heart.

Behold, Partha, my forms by hundreds and thousands. They are various, divine, and different in colour and form.

Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Aswins, and the Marutas. Behold, O Bharata, innumerable wonders never seen by you before.

Behold, Gudakesa, the entire universe of movables and immovables, and whatever else you desire to see, all collected in me.

But you are not fit to see me with these your eyes. Therefore I give you divine sight. Behold now my great Mystic Form.

Gita, Chap. XI., Slokas 5-8.

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Where is Srikrishna

There is Virtue

Where is Virtue

There is Victory.

Grant

Gracious Srikrishna

Thy

Grace.

SRIKRISHNA

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE KINGDOM OF MATHURA

At the time of which we are speaking,* the kingdom of Mathura† extended on both the sides of the *Jamuna*. It was neither a very big State, nor a very powerful one, but it was peopled by some of the heroic and proud clans‡ of the Aryan

* Colebrooke says that the battle of Kurukshetra, *i.e.* the time when Srikrishna was alive,—was fought in the 14th century B. C. Wilson and Elphinstone are at one with him. Wilford says it was fought in 1370 B. C. Pratt has fixed its date as the 12th century B. C. We have, however, fixed it some time between the 15th and 16th century B. C. See *Introduction*.

† Mathura is now a large district in the North-Western Provinces.

‡ They were called Yadus, Bhojas, Andhakas, Kukuras, Satwatas, Dasarahs, Vrisnis &c. &c.

race* that had already occupied all the fertile plains of Northern India. The country was called Surasenaka after the name of the founder of the kingdom, who was named Surasena. He was a descendant of Yadu, a scion of the great Lunar dynasty.†

* For an account of the Aryan race we would refer our readers to such works as the following :—

(a) Lectures on the Science of Language by Professor Max Muller, 1st and 2nd series.

(b) Weber's Modern Investigation into Ancient India.

(c) Bopp's Comparative Grammar.

(d) Prichard's Physical History of Mankind.

(e) Burnouf's Commentaire sur le Yacna, pp. 460-62, &c.

† Two of the most ancient and celebrated royal dynasties of India were called after the names of the Sun and the Moon. In almost all Sanskrit works the mention of these two dynasties is met with. The Mahavarata, Vagavata, Vishnu Purana and other such works say that the kings of Mathura belonged to the Lunar dynasty. The following is the Genealogy they quote :—

Chandra (moon) begot Budha, Budha begot Ila, Ila begot Pururava, Pururava begot Ayu, Ayu begot Nahusa, Nahusa begot Yayati, Yayati begot five sons, namely Yadu, Puru, Tarvasu, Drujhu and Anu. The kings and princes of Mathura (*e.g.* Krishna and others) were the descendants of Yadu and those of Hastinapur (*e.g.* the Kurus and the Pandavas) were the descendants of Puru.

In the Rig Veda, Manadala 10th. we find Pururava as a historical personage,—a powerful king. But in Yajur Veda

The city of Mathura itself was situated within a fort; it stood on the right bank of the deep blue *Jamuna*, which rolled by the foot of the Vrisni citadel. Outside the fort, as far as eyes could see,

Samhita, Madhyaudini Branch, Sec. V., Kandika 2, we find Pururava and Urvasi are but two pieces of wood, by striking which the sacrificial fire was made. In the Rig Veda, Mandala 10th, Suktas 48-49, we meet with the names of Yadu, Puru and Tarvasu, but there is no mention of their relationship to one another.

In *Harivansa Parva* of the *Harivansa* on account of the Yadu dynasty of Mathura is given, which exactly tallies with what we find in the other Puranas. But in *Vishnu Parva* of the same work a different account is given. There it is said that Yadu of Mathura was born of the Solar dynasty. It says that one Harjashya of the Solar dynasty was once the king of Ayodhya. He married the daughter of Madhu, the king of Madhuvana. Now this Madhuvana is said to be the modern Mathura. It then goes on to say that Harjashya, for some reasons or other, came to Mathura and lived in his father-in-law's house. He begot a son called Yadu, from whom the Yadavas of Mathura were descended.

In the *Ramayana* we find that Madhu's son, Lavana of Madhuvana, was defeated by Satrughana, the youngest brother of Rama of Ayodhya. It then goes on to say that it was Satrughana who founded the city of Mathura. Many years after, the great-grandson of Yadu named Bhima drove away the Ayodhya people from Mathura, and thenceforth it always remained in the hands of the descendants of Yadu, *viz.* the Yadavas.

lay extended green fields and grassy pastures, with small hamlets and villages shaded by beautiful orchards and gardens. Broad well-constructed roads ran in all directions ; over them moved along the chariots of warriors, the beasts of burden and the swift horses, the slow camels and the huge elephants of traders and merchants. It was a very busy city,—trade, agriculture, and business being in full swing.*

Some five miles west of the city lay an extensive wood known by the name of *Vrindavana*. A beautiful hill called *Govardhana* rose towering over its grassy plains. It abounded in various charming groves of *Bakulas* (*Mimusops Elengi*), *Kadambas* (*Nandea Kadamba*) and *Tamalas* (*Xanthocymus Pictorius*). Entwined with blossoming creepers and overhung with beautiful orchids, they resounded with the sweet notes of *Kokilas* (*Cuculus Indicus*), *Chakravakas* (*Anos Casarca*) and *Sarasas* (*Ardea Sibirica*). Deer, antelopes, buffaloes and various animals of various colours roamed in these shady arbours. The charming

Thus we find both the descendants of the Solar and the Lunar dynasties claimed Krishna as their own.

* See Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 41st, Slokas 19-23.

Vrindavana was the most beautiful woodlands that lay on the banks of the *Jamuna* from its mouth to the source.

But all the forests near and around Mathura were not as beautiful as the *Vrindavana*. The northern and southern outskirts of the kingdom of Surasenaka were covered with dense forests, abounding in fearful wild beasts and more fearful wild-men.* The original inhabitants of this part of the country, being driven away by the Aryan invaders, the ancestors of the *Vrisnis*, had taken shelter in these wild forests. These Nagas, as they were called, if not as much civilised as the Aryans, were not exactly wild-men. They had their own kings, their own armies and their own religions and societies. Forced to lead a wild life, driven as they were by their Aryan enemies, they lived far away in the innermost depth of the forest in their own wild settlements. Near and about Mathura the Nagas abounded, and though they kept burning in their heart the bitterest enmity towards their

* See Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII. Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 67th; Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVI.

Aryan conquerors, yet they did not give vent to their feeling. They paid them tribute and had commercial intercourse with them in the greatest amity. But if opportunity occurred, they did not let it slip without wreaking the severest vengeance on their great enemy.*

Besides the Vrisni Aryans and the wild Nagas, there lived, near Mathura, a powerful nomad clan, the people belonging to which were known by the name of the *Gopas*.† Some five or six miles

* In all the Puranas, the Nagas are described as "snakes." As the word *Naga* means a snake, we are afraid the authors of the Puranas thought it proper to describe them as such. But if we read their descriptions of these so called "snakes," we can come to no other conclusion than that these Nagas were but a race of wild-men, the original inhabitants of some parts of India, whence they were driven away by the Aryans. Such being the case, we have rejected all descriptions in which these people were spoken of as "snakes." See Muir's Sanskrit Texts. Vol. II., Chapter III.

† In some Puranas these Gopas are described as the Aryans of the Vaisya order. Nanda is said to be the son of Vasudeva's uncle by a Vaisya woman. But our readers will find that at the time of which we speak there was, in fact, no caste system amongst the Aryans. If Nanda and his clan were Vrishni Aryans, they would have been the Aryans of Mathura; but the fact is otherwise. Vidura was the son of a maid servant,—but he was still one of the Kurus. For all these reasons we believe that these Gopas were a sort of

from Mathura on the other side of the *Jamuna*, there lay an extensive pasture-ground, overspread with fresh, green and soft grass, abounding in shady trees and watery streamlets, and possessing every requisite for the tending of sheep and cattle. Here did these people,—the *Gopas*,—live with their waggons and cars, with their tents and canvas-sheds, with their wives and children, and sheep and cattle. Though they were powerful and numerous, yet they were not quarrelsome and dangerous; they loved peace, and they peacefully paid tribute to the ruling chiefs of Mathura. At the time of which we speak, Nanda was the chief of this great nomad clan.

gypsy race which adopted the Aryan religion, but led a nomad life.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGS OF MATHURA

WHEN the founder of the kingdom of Mathura, Surasena, died, he was succeeded by many of his descendants till at last one Ugrasena ascended the throne. He was the son of Ahuka, who had another son named Devaka. Both brothers had many children,* but it would suffice if we mention only two of them, namely the eldest son of Ugrasena, who was named Kansa† and the youngest daughter of Devaka, who was named Devaki. She was the mother of Krishna, and Kansa was the great tyrant of Mathura, who made strenuous

* Devaka had four sons and seven daughters. Ugrasena had nine sons and five daughters.

See Vagavata, Skanda N., Chapter XXIV., Vishnu Purana, Part III., Sec. XIV.

† Kansa was an illegitimate child. It is said that once upon a time when Ugrasena's wife went into the forest to sport, she was embraced by the king of Saiya. The fruit of this connection was Kansa.

efforts to kill him till at last he himself was killed by him.

Devaki was married to a prince of the Vrisni clan named Vasudeva. He was the eldest of the ten sons and five daughters of his father, Sura,* and he had ten wives of whom Devaki was the youngest.†

Though the Yadus of Mathura ruled over a very small kingdom, yet they had very high connections. They had many powerful relatives and allies.‡ Kansa married the two daughters of Jarasandha, the king of Magadha,§ who was then the most powerful potentate in all India. Vasudeva's five sisters were all married to some of the greatest Aryan potentates of Northern India. The eldest Pritha was married to Pandu, the prince of Kurujangala,|| and the fourth Srutasrava

* See Vishnu Purana, Part III., Sec. XIV., Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XXIV.

† See Ibid, Part III., Sec. XV., Ibid Skanda X., Chapter XXIV.

‡ They were connected by marriage with many kingdoms such as Avanti, Magadha, Kuru, Karusha, Kakeya, Vidharva, Videha, Kosala, Mithila &c. &c. See Vishnu Purana, Part III., Sec. XIV.

§ Modern South Behar.

|| Modern Delhi.

was married to the most illustrious Damugosha, the king of Chedi.*

Just after the marriage of Vasudeva and Devaki, a very great change came upon Mathura. On the day following, when the marriage ceremony was over, Kansa, in order to escort his sister Devaki to her new home, himself drove the chariot in which the newly married couple were proceeding to their own palace. The grand procession was slowly winding its course through the crowded streets of Mathura, when a deep voice was heard to rise above all other sounds. It said, "O fool, the eighth child of the damsel whom you are escorting will be the destroyer of your own life."†

The words thrilled through the crowd like a flash of lightning ; an ominous silence fell over all : an indescribable sensation passed through the assembled multitude ; Kansa started up, and pulled

* Modern Allahabad.

† Both the Vishnu Purana and Vagavata say that the voice was heard in the sky, but Harivansa says that Kansa learnt from Narada that he would be slain by the eighth child of his sister Devaki. See Vishnu Purana, Part V. Sec. I. Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter I. See also Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 56th.

the horses back. With a jerk the chariot stopped, and he stared back on the happy pair like an infuriated bull. He lost all self-control, seized his sister by the hair, and raised his sword to cut her down.

But Vasudeva fell on his knees and entreated him to spare her life. He solemnly promised that he would hand over to him every child that she would bring forth. With the weepings of his sister, with the entreaties of her husband and with the earnest implorings of the assembled thousands, Kansa was moved. He spared his sister's life and allowed her to repair to her recently married husband's home.

CHAPTER III

THE PLOT AGAINST KANSA

THE awful words heard by Kansa preyed upon his mind. Though he tried to laugh them away, yet they remained fastened to his heart. He brooded over them, and as time wore on, they made deeper and deeper impressions on his mind till the fatal words made him sad, destroyed his appetite and drove his sleep away, — nay, they ran through his veins as so many streams of burning sulphur.

When he heard that his sister, Devaki, had conceived, he roared and foamed like a mad bull. He passed orders to throw both Devaki and Vasudeva into prison. He commanded that they should be kept imprisoned in the castle dungeon till their child was born. He did not stop there. He killed all the sons of Vasudeva that were born to him by his other wives. To make himself more safe and his position more secure, he usurped the throne and imprisoned his own father, the

old king Ugrasena. He beheaded all whom he suspected to be his enemies. The heads of many revered chiefs of the Yadu dynasty kissed the ground, and a reign of terror came over Mathura.*

Many of the Yadus and the Vrisnis escaped with their wives and children from the kingdom of Mathura; many hid themselves in forests and hills, and many took shelter in other kingdoms.

King Kansa ruled over a most disaffected people. But he was too powerful, and so he did not care the least what cruelties he perpetrated, what sins he committed, or what oppressions he made.†

* Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter II., Slokas 1-4, says :—
 “O king, Kansa, being proud of his prowess and making an alliance with the people of Magadha, joined with Pralamba, Vaka, Chanura, Trinavarta, Agha, Keshi, Dhanuka, Vana, Vauma and other Asura kings and tyrannised over the Yadus. Having been fearfully persecuted by his terrible oppressions, they escaped to the Kuru, Panchala, Kakeya, Salya, Vidharva, Nishada, Videha and Kosala kingdoms. Only a few remained to serve Kansa.”

† In Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 56th, Kansa says :—“Who is there in the world of men who could dare provoke me? I can with these my two long arms overwhelm the whole earth. From this day I shall persecute men, beasts, birds and other creatures that follow the celestials.”

But none of his subjects forgot the words so ominously uttered on the day when their beloved princess Devaki was proceeding to her newly married husband's home. They solemnly believed the words to be the heaven's prophecy. They, therefore, eagerly and anxiously,—nay hoping against all hope,—waited for the birth of the eighth son of that princess, for it was the only means of their deliverance from the cruel persecutions of their tyrant king. That son was to be their only saviour,—the saviour ordained by Providence.

It was natural that they should make strenuous efforts to save the children of Devaki, at least the eighth one.* Many of the Yadu chiefs

* Neither the Vishnu Purana, nor Harivansa, nor Vagavata, nor Bramha Purana says in so many words that there was a plot to save Devaki's child and to overthrow Kansa. But if we carefully study this portion of their narratives, we can come to no other conclusion than that the child was saved by a deep-laid conspiracy in which, perhaps, almost all the people of Mathura, besides the Gopas of Gokula and the Nagas of the forest, joined. The Mahavarata in more than one place gives us to understand that Kansa was destroyed through the united efforts of all the Vrisnis. In the Sava Parva, Chapter LXIII., Sloka 8, Vidura addresses Dhritarashtra thus —

secretly communicated with Nanda, the chief of the Gopas. They also communicated with the chief of the Nagas,—the two nearest powerful men with whose help and co-operation they hoped to overthrow the tyrant. They left no stone unturned to save the child of Devaki,—the child whom they all believed to be the heaven's ordained Saviour of Mathura.

When all Mathura was eagerly expecting for the eighth conception of Devaki, Vasudeva's another wife, named Rohini, conceived. Kansa's persecutions had become so unbearable and the people had become so impatient that many of

"The Andhakas, the Yadavas and the Bhojas, uniting together, abandoned Kansa. At the request (of the whole tribe), Kansa was killed by that slayer of foes, Krishna."

In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VIII., and in Vishnu purana, Part V., Sec. VI., we find the priest of the Vrisni race, named Garga, secretly comes to Gokula and as secretly performs the initiatory rites of Krishna. In Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 36th, Kansa says:—"When they (Rama and Krishna) would be destroyed, their friends and allies, Vasudeva and other Vrisnis, Vojas and Dasarahs will easily be destroyed. I shall also destroy my avaricious father Ugrasena, his brother Davaka and others who are rebellious against me.

Vayu Purana, Chapter 34th, Slokas 98-200, distinctly says that there was a conspiracy and a secret plot to overthrow Kansa.

them thought the expected child of Rohini to be the identical one alluded to by the prophecy. They, therefore, determined to save it. Rohini was secretly removed to the nomad settlement and kept hidden in the house of Nanda,* where in course of time a boy was born of her.

A few months after, Devaki conceived. Another strenuous effort was made to remove her out of the reach of the tyrant king. But she and her husband were kept prisoners under look and key in a cell where none could reach them. Failing to remove her, the conspirators thought of removing the child as soon as it would be born. They bribed the guard, they won over the best confidants of the king, and secretly sent words to the Gopa and the Naga chiefs ; they made every arrangement to make an exchange of Devaki's child with another. It was absolutely necessary to keep the birth of the child a dead secret, for if Kansa was not thus deceived, he would move heaven and earth to find out the child and destroy

* We shall later on quote those portions of the Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata where it is narrated how the child Krishna was saved and how an exchange of him was made with the child of Nanda.

it. It would then be impossible to save the child from the fearful wrath of the cruel king, wherever it might be kept.

But who would agree to allow his or her dear child to be exchanged with that of Devaki, knowing it fully well that it would be mercilessly destroyed by the cruel Kansa? Was there such a noble man or woman in all Mathura who could make this great sacrifice? Searches were made, and many people in and around Mathura were appealed to, till at last the great and noble Nanda offered his child, which was expected to be born almost simultaneously with that of the Vrisni princess.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA

IT was the midnight of the 8th day of the Lunar month in the black fortnight of the fourth month of the Solar year,* when the constellation *Rohini* (Aries) was in the ascendant and the constellation *Aswini* (Taurus) and others and also all the planets were favourable,—it was on that memorable night, some three thousand five hundred years ago, that Krishna was born in the prison cell of the Vrisni citadel in the holy city of Mathura.† One of his biographers says :—

“The moment became endued with all good properties. The sky became clear : the stars shone in brilliancy ; the cities, the villages, the pastures and the mines, passed through a great change ; the waters of the rivers became purer : the lakes and tanks shone in beauty with lotuses and lilies ; the

* It was Wednesday of the month of *Vaishakh* (about the 1st day of September).

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. III.

blossoms of wild trees opened up; the birds began to sing in great delight: the *Kinnaras* and the *Gandharvas* sang; the *Siddhas* and the *Charanas* recited hymns, the *Vidyadharas* and the *Apsaras* danced, the *Rishis* and the *Celestials** showered flowers on earth. At such an hour of the night, the Exalted One took his birth in the world."†

Another says:—"The pious obtained new delight: the strong winds were pacified, and the rivers flowed silently: the oceans made music with their murmurings; the *Gandharvas* began to sing, and the *Apsaras* began to dance; the celestials, stationed in the sky, began to shower flowers, and the holy fire glowed with a mild flame."‡

Only a few lines below, the same authors write that it was a very stormy and fearful night. It was a night when rain was pouring like a sheet of waters,—when blazing lightnings were flashing from one corner of the sky to the other,—when

* The *Kinnaras*, *Gandharvas*, *Siddhas*, *Charanas*, *Vidyadharas*, *Apsaras* and the *Celestials* are higher beings than man. They are often mentioned in Sanskrit works.

† Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter III., Slokas 1-8.

‡ Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. III., Slokas 3-5.

dreadful thunder was roaring and fearful hurricane was blowing, shaking the earth to its very centre.

In this fearful night the child was born. As soon as it was born, Vasudeva wrapped it up with a cloth and hastily came out of the prison cell, the guards and the friends outside helping him to pass out secretly and noiselessly from the dungeon.*

* We shall quote the descriptions of this portion of the story from the Vishnu Purana and Vagavata. We would ask our readers to form their own opinion.

Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. III., says:—"The guards and gate-keepers of Mathura were all charmed with *Yoganidra* (goddess of illusion) and none of them obstructed the passage of Vasudeva. It was raining heavily at that time, and the many-headed Naga, Shesha, followed Vasudeva, spreading his hoods over his head. And when he, with the child in his arms, crossed the *Jamuna*, deep and dangerous as it was containing many whirl-pools, its waters were silent and rose not above his knees.

Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter III., says:—"By the power of that illusion, the consciousness of the gate-keepers and the citizens was destroyed. They all fell into a deep sleep. The doors and the gates, barred with iron shutters and strongly bound with iron chains, gave way as soon as Vasudeva appeared before them with the child. The clouds roared and rained. (The Naga) Ananta went behind shadowing them with his hoods and thus protecting them from the rains.

The Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 59th, does not mention any detail as to how the child was removed from the

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Noiselessly did he pass out of the fort, and the Naga Chief escorted him up to the door of Nanda's house, where the child was silently exchanged with that of Jasada, the excellent wife of the nomad Chief. With Nanda's child, which was a girl, Vasudeva as silently and as quietly returned to the prison as he went out of it.

Very elaborate but strictly secret arrangements were made that night by the enemies of Kansa to save that auspicious child,—that Ordained Saviour of Mathura,—whom Kansa was as eager to destroy as they were to save. He was out-witted. The Vrishnis with the help of the nomad chief and the Naga chieftain managed not only to remove the child to a place of safety, but to deceive him in respect of the birth of the eighth child of Devaki.*

prison. It simply says that Vasudeva took the child to Nanda's house and there made the exchange.

* If Kansa were not deceived, and if he had come to know that his destroyer had been already born, he would have destroyed all the children throughout his dominions, and Nanda's household would not have been spared. Even after killing the supposed eighth child of Devaki, he did not rest satisfied, for in the Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. IV., he says:—"Let us vigorously find out all young children upon

Next morning when intelligence was brought to Kansa that a female child had been born of Devaki, he wildly rushed to the prison, and notwithstanding the entreaties and supplications of his sister, he seized it by its legs and dashed it against the prison wall.*

Destroying the eighth child of Devaki, Kansa felt himself safe. His anxiety was gone, his fear was removed; but he could not pardon his sister or her husband. He banished them both from his court and his city.†

earth, and let every boy in whom there is unusual vigour be killed without mercy."

* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata say that as soon as the child was dashed against the stone, it rose up into the sky and developed into a goddess, who said, "O fool, he who shall kill thee has already taken his birth." But Vayu Purana, Chapter 34th, Slokas 201-203, says that the girl escaped, and she was secretly brought up in Mathura.

† We need not say that many miracles are narrated in the accounts of the birth of Krishna as given by the Puranas. We have not narrated them, as we shall not do it all through this work."

CHAPTER V

KRISHNA AS A CHILD

BUT he who would destroy him grew up day by day amongst cattle and kine. Hidden away from the sharp eyes and the cunning spies of the cruel tyrant, he grew up amongst the cow-herd boys and the nomad girls of the Vrindavana. He was nourished and nurtured as an idol not only of Gokula,* but of all Mathura.†

* The name of the Gopa settlement was Gokula. It was also called Vraja.

† Only on a very few occasions, the early life of Krishna is mentioned in the Mahavarata. But we have already said in the Introduction that it is not a history of *his* life. The Mahavarata is the oldest of all the works on which we base our accounts. Therefore, before we write the history of the early life of Krishna, we are bound to place before our readers what this great work says about it. We get a very short account of Krishna's early life in the Mahavarata. In Sava Parva, Chapter XLI. Slokas 4-11, relate that Sisupala, the king of Chedi, thus abused him. We quote the passage :—

“ You have once again given pain to our hearts by reciting the deeds of this man, such as his killing Putana and others. O Bhishma, arrogant and fool as you are, and also

The settlement of the Gopas lay extended on the banks of the *Jamuna*,—the tapering peaks of the beautiful *Govardhana* rising behind it and standing like its guardian angel.* It was orna-

desirous of praising Krishna, why does not your tongue split into a hundred parts? O Bhishma, how do you, superior as you are in knowledge, desire to praise this cow-herd whose evil repute is told even by men of childish intelligence? O Bhishma, if he killed a vulture in his childhood, what is there to praise him for that act? What is there also in his killing two beasts, a horse and a bull, both ignorant of the science of war? O Bhishma, what is there wonderful if this man threw down by a kick an inanimate piece of wood, namely a waggon? O Bhishma, in my opinion there was nothing remarkable in this man's holding for a week the Govardhana hill which is like an ant-hill. O Bhishma, 'while sporting on the hills, this man ate a large quantity of food,' hearing these words of yours, many have been much astonished!"

It is a pity that there is an apparent gap between the Chapters XL. and XLI., in the Mahavarata that we now possess; one chapter is evidently lost. It is a great loss to us, for in that chapter Bhishma narrated the achievements of Krishna's early life. In the passage we have quoted, Sisupala refers to this speech of Bhishma, but unfortunately the present Mahavarata does not contain it.

* The village of Gokula is still in existence some five or six miles from Mathura. It is a straggling village with some modern temples. It is very doubtful whether the present site of Gokula was the original one. In one place, Hari-vansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 60th says:—"He saw Vraja near the Govardhana hill adjacent to the bank of the

mented with innumerable charming creepers; it was adorned with groves beautiful in their sylvan bowers. It resounded with the sweet tinklings of the anklets of the Gopa maidens moving about with milk-pots on their heads: it thrilled with the joyous laughter of merry boys driving cattle to their pens. With the bellowing of the cows, with the sweet silvery sounds of the bells tied round the necks of the calves, with the smell of milk, butter and *ghee*, it breathed a celestial fragrance. In this charming land of beauty and bliss, the child daily grew up as the idol of the land of Surasenaka.

His childhood, however, passed through many a crisis. He was once attacked with a fatal disease, but he miraculously escaped. His poet-biographers thus describe it in their own poetical way:—

“While they were thus living in Gokula, Putana, the child-killer,* taking up Krishna asleep

Jamuna.” Modern Gokula is many miles off from the Govardhana hill.

* Both in the Vagavata and Harivansa, Putana is described as a bird. In the Mahavarata also she has been described as such. The Harivansa, however, calls her the nurse of Kansa, but the Vagavata calls her a fearful demoness. Vishnu Purana describes her simply as a child-killer. From a simple child-killer in the Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter

at night, gave him her breast to suck. And whatever child is sucked by Putana at 'night dies instantly, having its limbs wearied and exhausted. But Krishna, laying hold of the breast of Putana with two hands, sucked it with such a violence that he drained off her life; and the terrible Putana, roaring aloud and giving way in every point, fell dead on the ground. Hearing her cries, the people of Gokula got up in great alarm. They saw Putana lying on the earth with Krishna in her arms. Snatching up Krishna, Jasada waved over him a cow-tail brush to guard him against evil, while Nanda placed dried cow-dung powder over his head."*

V., she is turned into a bird and a nurse in the Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 62nd. She then turns out to be a terrible giantess] and a fearful demoness in the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VI. It is very difficult to say definitely what the authors of the Puranas really meant by Putana. Putana means a kind of bird, and again Putana means a sort of children's disease. In the Harivansa, Chapter VI. Slokas 11-12, we had it distinctly mentioned that at the time when Krishna was born, Vrindavana was infested with various kinds of fearful birds. Again in one of our greatest works on medicine, namely Susruta, we find in its Uttara Tantra, Chapter 27th and 37th, that Putana is a fearful children's disease. The last inference we have adopted.

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter V.

A few months after, he met with another very serious accident. One day Jasoda left him asleep underneath a waggon, but the child soon awoke and cried for breasts. Finding his mother away, he began to kick up his feet. Thus struck his feet against the wheels of the waggon. He was endued with such extraordinary strength that the waggon was immediately overturned, and all the pots and pans were upset and broken. All the people came and exclaiming, "Alas! Alas!" Nanda hurriedly took him up on his lap, and Jasada offered worship to the broken pots and pans and to the overturned waggon with curds, flowers, fruits and unbruised grains.*

A few months more passed away. The child was one day lying on the green grass, smiling sweetly and giving inexpressible joy to all the Gopa maidens and matrons that were sitting around him. A fearful bird suddenly pounced upon him and carried him away in its talons.† A great uproar was

* Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 26th says that Krishna was three months old when this incident took place. In the Harivansa the overturning of the waggon precedes the death of Putana.

† Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 26th, says that Krishna was one year old when this incident took place.

made ; the women shrieked, the boys roared ; the men rushed out with clubs and sticks, but the bird soared higher and higher, till at last it was seen to drop. It fell only a few yards from the spot from which it carried away the child. Men, women and children ran towards the place ; they saw that the bird was dead, but the child was safe, holding tightly its long throat and lying on its soft feathery breast.*

Thus passed his childhood through many serious crises. Nanda and his people became more and more cautious to keep him out of harm's way. They had undertaken a very serious and solemn task ; they had to protect and bring up the saviour of their country. As time wore on, they more and more seriously felt the weight of the responsibility that lay on their head.

When the child was yet in its first year, the great priest of the Vrisni race, Garga, one day secretly came to Gokula ; and there did he secretly

* This story is not found in the Vishnu Purana or in the Harivansa. It is mentioned only in the Vagavata. Skanda X., Chapter VII. It says that this bird was a demon named Trinavarta, a servant of Kansa.

perform the initiatory rites* of the two boys,—namely the son of Rohini and that of Devaki. He named the former Rama† and the latter Krishna. Having done all that was necessary, he as secretly returned to Mathura.‡

* If our readers are curious to learn what sort of ceremonies these initiatory rites were, we would refer them to that celebrated Sanskrit work called the *Kalpa Sutra*. This work is divided into three parts, namely (1) *Sraitya Sutra*, (2) *Grihya Sutra* and (3) *Samayanacharika Sutra*. The first contains the accounts of all the principal Sacrifices (Yagmas), the second, all rites that were performed on a man from his birth to death and the third, the rules of *Brahmacharjya* (scholastic life), daily prayers &c. These three works were written or compiled immediately after the death of Krishna. They are therefore the best history of the social, religious and political state of India of that age. The *Kalpa Sutra* has been translated and incorporated in the *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by Professor Max Muller.

† As usual Rama had many other names, such as Valarama, Baladeva, Sankarsana &c., &c. Krishna had one hundred and eight names.

‡ The Harivansa does not mention the performance of the initiatory rites by Garga.

CHAPTER VI

KRISHNA AS A BOY

KRISHNA daily grew up and soon learnt to walk. He was extremely handsome in person and beautiful in appearance.* He was endued with extraordinary physical strength and supernatural energy; his sprightliness was phenomenal and his merri-

* The general idea is that the complexion of Krishna was black. The idea has arisen from the fact that the meaning of the word "Krishna" is "black." But from the careful study of the Puranas and the Mahavarata, we find his complexion was far from being "black." At the time when he was born, the Aryans were a *golden race*. The original colour of their complexion had not then undergone any change, though the climate of the plains of India had already begun to tell upon it. A few had already been born who were not as golden as the rest, and amongst them we might place Krishna, Arjuna, Draupadi and others. All these people were called Krishna (black) in contradistinction to others who were all golden in complexion. It clearly signifies that men of such complexion were then very rare amongst the Aryans. The complexion of Krishna was not "black," but was like the colour of "the newly budded blade of grass," which is that of shining gold with a very faint brilliancy of black or blue. Krishna also means "Anointed."

ment was extreme. His merry laughter thrilled through the village, and his sweet words charmed its every heart.

The little Krishna became the cynosure of all eyes. All the boys and girls of Gokula were slowly drawn towards him; they forgot their play-mates,—their brothers and sisters,—nay even their own parents. To live with him, to play with him and to pass their time with him were their greatest joy. Early at the dawn of day, even when the sun had not appeared on the horizon, they all rose from their beds and ran to the door of Nanda's house; and as soon as he came leaping forward to meet them, they took hold of his hands and ran away with him to play.

He was not only the beloved of the boys and the girls, but all the men and the women of Gokula, both young and old, loved him more than their own children. They knew not why they felt for him such unusual affection;—they knew not why they grew so fond of him. With the birth of Krishna love pervaded the atmosphere of Gokula; and as he grew up, a great change slowly and silently came upon the people. They began to love one another more than they did

before. Disputes and dissensions disappeared, and happiness reigned in every house.*

Krishna was here, there and everywhere. Now he was amongst the calves pulling them by the tails: now he was on the top of the tree, imitating the sweet notes of the birds. Now he was dancing on the lawn to the great delight of the maidens; now he was running amidst the heaps of ashes and fifth to the great consternation of the matrons.† The over-sprightliness of little Krishna filled Jasada with great alarm: the boy ran dashingly amongst the wild bulls and vicious cows. He ran after ferocious wolves and rabid

* In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XIII., Slokas 36-37, Valadeva, marking this wondrous manifestation of love in Vrindavana, says,—“What wonder is this? As the love of the Gokula people formerly increased daily for Krishna, so it does now for their own children. My mind also is full of love for them. What is this *Maya* (illusion)?

† It appears that Krishna's conduct was not above all complaints. We find in the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VIII, a deputation of Gokula women waited upon Jasada with a long list of grievances and complaints against him. This is what they said.—“Your boy sometimes lets loose the calves when they should be kept tied. If we reproach him, he laughs and runs away. Like a thief he sometimes eats up our curd and milk. What he cannot eat, he gives away to the monkeys.”

jackals; he got on the top of the tallest trees, and thence jumped down into the rushing currents of the *Jamuna*. He had a thousand and one hair-breadth escapes. Though the loving eyes of Jasada,—nay of all the women of Gokula,—were upon him, yet they could not keep him out of the path of danger. To keep him quiet in one place was as impossible to them as to stop the rolling and foaming currents of the river that rolled by their village. Not to speak of loving Jasada, the hearts of all the Gokula women were in a continuous trepidation for his sake. They could not attend to their household duties.

One day Jasada got tired of watching him. She ran after him, and after catching him, she tied a strong rope round his waist. Then dragging him near a wooden mortar,* she tied the other end of the rope to it and kept him fastened there.

When she went away to look after her household duties, Krishna tried to extricate himself from the long rope tied round his waist. In his attempt

* These mortars were made of the trunks of big trees. They were shaped like the letter X., one side being dug out to make a hole in which grains were put and then pounded by a long wooden pestle. These mortars were generally one maund and a half in weight.

to do it, he began to drag the heavy mortar after him. It fell on its side and then rolled after him till it stuck fast athwart two *Arjunat* trees. He pulled the rope with all his might, and soon were the two big trees uprooted; they then fell with a tremendous noise.

Hearing the cracking noise, the inhabitants of Vraja came to see what the matter was. They saw the two huge trees with broken branches and stems lying on the ground and the boy stuck between them with a long rope tightened round his waist. He was laughing ;—* he was a stranger to fear.†

† These trees are generally of small size. They are called in Bengali and English *Kuruchi*, in Latin *Wrightia anti-dysentrica*.

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI.

‡ The Puranas say that these two trees were in fact two celestial beings called *Jakshas*, who were converted into trees by a curse,—a state from which they were relieved by Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, who broke down these two trees in his childhood.

The Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter IX., Slokas 22-23 says :—" These two trees in their previous life were the two sons of Kuvera (the god of wealth). For their great pride, they were converted into trees by the curse of Narada. They were named Nalakuvera and Manigriva. Both of them were very handsome." The Vagavata says it required many pieces of ropes before Jasada could bind Krishna. All the Puranas say that because he was thus bound, he was called *Damudara*.

CHAPTER VII

KRISHNA IN THE VRINDAVANA

ON account of the appearance of Putana and Brinavarta, and of the over-turning of the waggon and the up-rooting of the trees, the mind of Nanda was filled with misgivings. The elders took these circumstances with alarm ; they considered them as evil omens. The thought of leaving Gokula and looking for some other forest for their habitation and pasture-ground was uppermost in every one's mind.

When such was the state of the mind of the Gokula people, something happened which hastened the departure of the Gopas from their ancient abode. Hundreds of ferocious wolves infested the forest. They made great havocks amongst the calves, and grew to be an intolerable pest.* The whole country was filled with them,

* This story is found only in the Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 64th. It runs to the effect that in order to take the Gopas to the beautiful Vrindavana, Krishna himself created these wolves from the down of his body.

and their depredations left the Gopas on other alternative than to leave Gokula and seek some other pasture-ground.

One day they all met together and thus addressed their chief:—"We cannot any longer remain in this place. Let us go to some other part of the forest. Many evil omens threaten us here with destruction. Let us leave this place and go to the *Vrindavana*."* Nanda replied, "If you consider that we must leave Vraja to-day, then ask all to get ready at once. Let them not make any delay."†

So the order was passed. A great commotion broke out all over the village, and preparations were being made everywhere. The well-fed bulls were soon yoked to the waggons; the tents were pulled down and the canvas-sheds were rolled up into bundles. Pots and pans were placed on the waggons, and the children, the old and the infirm,

* The Vagavata says that one wise old man, named Upananda, spoke these words to Nanda, but the Vishnu Purana or Harivansa does not mention any name. Vishnu Purana, however, says that Vrindavana was selected by Krishna himself.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI.

took their seats on them. Conchs and trumpets were blown, and the kine and the calves were brought out of the pens. The Gopa maidens, clad in various coloured clothes and adorned with beautiful ear-rings, walked with milk-pots on their heads. They passed out of Gokula in rows, singing their sweet and melodious rural songs.* The Gopas,—young and old,—armed with various weapons, drove before them the flocks of kine and calves, while their priests followed them chanting the hymns.

Soon did they leave behind them their once happy and beautiful Gokula. It became then filled with crows, dogs, jackals and wolves. All its life and beauty being gone, it looked like a dreary desert.

Slowly did they move on, resounding all the forest with their shouts, with the thrilling sounds of their trumpets, with their songs, and with their merry peals of laughter and uproarious jokes, till at last they arrived at the beautiful wood of *Vrindavana*. There did they stop placing their

* This description is taken from Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI., Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 69th, and Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XI.

waggon in the form of a crescent.* Within that semi-circle, protected on three sides by their heavy waggon, they drove in their cattle.

The men at once began to cut down the trees with their axes, and the women to cleanse the grounds with their broomsticks. Tents were pitched and canvas-sheds were raised, pots and pans were taken down from the waggon, and fires were lit all over the place. The forest which had been echoed only with the melodious notes of the birds was now resounded with the shouts of the Gopas. The wild animals fled in fear, the beautiful stags and the gentle deer looked up in wonder ; the peacocks wildly shrieked and the birds flew away from their nests.†

Nanda and his clan soon settled down in their new home, and when night stepped in, silence slowly pervaded the atmosphere.

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI.

† Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 65th.

CHAPTER VIII

FIGHT WITH KALIYA

IN the latter end of the summer the Gopas came to the *Vrindavana*,* and the rainy season soon set in. The two boys, Rama and Krishna, along with innumerable other Gopa boys, daily went out to tend the cattle. When the shade of evening fell over the forest, when the sun rolled down the horizon gilding the leaves of the trees with glittering gold, they then blew their pipes, collected their cattle, and winded back their steps towards their home, singing in chorus the sweetest song that was ever heard in the solitude of a wild forest.

But the *Vrindavana* was not as free from danger as it was charming and beautiful. The best

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI., and Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 64th say that Krishna was seven years of age when he came to the Vrindavana, but Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XII., Sloka 36, says that he was only five.

part of it was infested by the wild Nagas whose chief, Kaliya,* ruled over a vast tract. It also abounded in various kinds of ferocious animals. Thus the Gopas were neither undisturbed, nor secure in their new home. They were always in great fear of the fierce Nagas and the more fearful wild beasts. But the wonderful boy who was daily blazing up amongst them like a mass of fire soon came to their rescue.†

When he saw that his beloved parents, his dear playmates, his fellow-men and women were all troubled by the wild animals and the fierce Nagas, he resolved to rid the forest of all its pests.‡

* All the Puranas mention this Naga, but they describe him as a "snake." We shall quote later on some passages from the Vishnu Purana which will show that we are justified in rejecting the theory that he was a "snake."

† In Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 13th, the Gopas say,—“Through your favour this entire Gopa settlement has been rid of all its enemies and made a blessed region.”

‡ Vishnu Purana and Harivansa mention two wild animals, namely *Arishta*, a bull, and *Keshin*, a horse, which Krishna killed before he left Vrindavana for Mathura. But the Vagavata speaks of the destruction of five others, namely *Vatsa*, a calf, *Vaka*, a crane, *Agha*, a snake, *Sankhachura*, a Jaksha, and *Boma*, an Asura. We have not described in this work the destruction of any wild animals by Krishna.

One day when he went out to tend the cattle, he secretly slipped away from his companions and boldly walked into the Naga settlement.* He challenged the Naga chief to a single combat. A fierce encounter ensued, and the delicate boy of nine beat the stalwart, black Naga. The noise brought out all the wildmen from their huts. They

We shall, therefore, quote one short passage from Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XIV.

“One evening whilst Krishna was engaged in the *Rasha* dance, the demon Arishta, disguised as a bull, came there striking terror into the hearts of all. Being seized with fear on seeing that dreadful bull, the cow-herds and their females cried out, “Krishna! Krishna!”—Krishna then shouted and slapped his arms in defiance. When the demon heard his voice, he turned upon his challenger; and fixing his eyes and pointing his horns at the belly of Krishna, he ran furiously upon him. Krishna did not stir a single pace, but, smiling in sport and derision, he awaited the approach of the bull. He then seized him and held him by the horns, whilst he pressed his sides by his knees. He then wrung his throat as if it were but a piece of wet cloth. Then tearing off one of the horns, he beat the dreadful demon with it until he died vomitting blood.”

* The Puranas have described Kaliya as a fearful snake living at the bottom of a lake. They say that Krishna dived down and fought with him. Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 67th, says,—“Situating only two miles north of the Gopa settlement, there was an extensive lake.” Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVI., Sloka 6, says,—“O king, there was a lake in the Kalindi (*Jamuna*).”

stood gazing in wonder at the extraordinary boy who was fighting with their powerful chief.

Here in the forest the Gopa boys, missing their beloved Krishna, ran to the spot whence the uproar came. When they saw what Krishna was after, they were seized with great alarm. They ran back to their homes as quickly as their legs could carry them, screaming all the way, "Krishna has foolishly jumped into the lake of the Kaliya Naga."*

His biographer then adds†,—“Hearing these words which appeared to them as the bursting of thunder, the Gopas and their wives, with Jasada at their head, proceeded in all speed towards the lake. ‘Alas ! where is Krishna gone !’ they cried. Being greatly bewildered and terrified, Jasada and the other Gopa women ran in all possible haste. The mighty Rama and the Gopa chief Nanda and the other Gopas all soon came to the bank of the *Jamuna*, and there they saw him surrounded by the innumerable Nagas. Nanda and Jasada were

* This is a quotation from Vishnu Purana. The Puranas, as we have already said, have described Kaliya as a snake living at the bottom of a lake.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII.

frightened out of their wits. The wives of the other cow-herds, stricken with grief, wept aloud."

But in the meanwhile Krishna had thrown the great Naga chief down on the ground. He had pressed him to the earth and stood on his prostrate body. The Naga had fainted, and his life was at his victor's mercy. Seeing their great chief thus discomfited by a mere boy,—nay a child,—the Nagas in great consternation fled in all directions. Their women, struck with awe, came trembling and weeping to Krishna with their folded hands. They fell on their knees and entreated him to spare the life of their chief. Krishna smiled and allowed the half-dead Naga to rise. He spared his life, but he commanded him to leave the forest at once. He readily obeyed and left *Vrindavana* that very day with all his people.*

* It is extremely difficult to make out what the authors of the Puranas really meant by Krishna's combat with Kaliya. It is capable of three interpretations, namely:—

(a) That he really killed a very dangerous snake that infested the waters of the *Jamuna*.

(b) That he fought with the chief of the wild-men and drove him from the *Vrindavana*.

(c) That it is an allegory signifying that Krishna who was an incarnation of God subdued the influence of Kalya which means Time.

His biographer continues,—“When the Naga had departed, the cow-herds received back Krishna as one risen from the dead. They embraced him and bathed his forehead with tears of joy ”*

They were all filled with great astonishment at the undreamt-of exploit of the wonderful boy. They felt an undescribable awe and respect for him. From that day that little boy virtually became their guide, leader and chief.

We have rejected the first and the third theories and accepted the second. If Kaliya were really a snake, the Puranas would have described this affair exactly in the way they have described the destruction of the other animals by Krishna. They would not have made Kaliya a snake-god and given him human shape, features, speech &c. Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII., says,—“He was surrounded by many other snakes and hundreds of serpent nymphs, adorned with rich ornaments, whose ear-rings glittered with brilliancy as the wearers moved along.” The Vagavata, Skanda N., Chapter XVI., says,—“His (Kaliya’s) wives came to him with dishevelled hair and disordered clothes.”

And again if it were such a sublime allegory, the authors of the Puranas would have put it in the later period of Krishna’s life when he was acknowledged to be God, instead of at a period when he was but a boy, and when none knew what stuff he was made of. We believe, therefore, that the whole affair was simply his successful encounter with a strong wild-man.

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII.

CHAPTER IX

SPORTS IN THE FOREST

ONE day Krishna desired to hold a grand picnic* in the beautiful forest which was then in its greatest luxuriance. Early in the morning he rose from his bed and awoke his mother. He asked for his clothes, his horn, his pipe; he wished to go away to tend the kine. Loving Yasoda put on his head a beautiful crown made of peacock's plumes; she placed round his neck a garland of wild flowers. His arms were decked with ornaments made of glass beads and corals, his feet were adorned with the anklets that tinkled as he went along. A long yellow sheet hang from his shoulders down to his knees and a piece of cloth was girded round his loins.† He was charmingly

* Vishnu Purana and Harivansa do not record the picnic, but they describe the sports. It is only the Vagavata which says that Krishna held a grand picnic in the forest.

† The lovely appearance of Krishna of Vrindavana is well-known all over India. His image may be seen in innumerable temples. All the Puranas describe him as such. See Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XI., Slokas 5-6.

handsome, and beautiful was his enchanting robe. His noble and lovely appearance as he was seen in the Vrindavana has come down to us from generation to generation through many hundreds of years, but it is still as fresh in the memory of India as it was three thousand five hundred years ago in the Gopa settlement in the forest of Mathura.

Awaking the boys and blowing his horn, he came out of the village, and hundreds of lovely boys hastened after him with horns, whips and pipes in their hands. They brought together their calves and kine ; and mingling them with those driven by Krishna, they merrily went on,—some dancing, some singing, and others playing on their pipes.

As they passed through the settlement, hundreds of pretty girls ran up to the doors of their huts. They looked at the procession with feelings of joy and admiration. Fond Jasada with tears in her eyes stood at the threshold of her house gazing at Krishna as long as he remained in sight. She stood there mentally praying for his safe return.

When at last the boys reached the pasture-ground, they let loose their cattle to graze. They then began to play, sport and frolic about. Some

danced with the peacocks, some played on their pipes ; some sang with the bees, some imitated the sweet notes of the *Kokilas*: some ran after the shadows of the birds that flew along the sky, some walked whirling about, mimicking the slow and majestic motion of the swan, and some pulled the monkeys by the tail, and with them leaped from bough to bough. The whole forest thus rolled in a sea of joy and merriment with their hearty laughter and joyous shouts. Krishna played with them all. Those hundreds of loving boys loved him with all the love they felt in their innocent little hearts. And so equally flowed the wonderful love of that wonderful boy that one and all of them were individually conscious that Krishna loved him the best.*

At last the boys gathered together and stood round their beloved leader. They sang in chorus joining their sweet strains with those of their friend and guide. When Krishna sang, the whole forest was filled with a celestial cadence. The deer stood spell-bound, the peacock danced, the

* This description is taken from the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XII., Slokas 1-9.

birds lay quiet on the trees,—all stood enchanted as his sweet voice thrilled through the air, rising higher and higher till all seemed to be a sea of bliss.*

He then took up his ever sweet pipe and played on it some of his favourite tunes. Its sweet notes rent the air, enchanting all the birds and beasts. It pierced through the higher and higher strata of the atmosphere. In the distant Gopa settlement, the men raised their heads and listened to it, the women gave up their household duties, the maidens felt an undescribable uneasiness in their minds, and the little girls began to dance with its music.†

When the sun passed the meridian, Krishna took the boys to the beautiful banks of the *Jamuna*. There did they all sit down to their homely luncheon. They talked, they laughed, they made themselves merry as they ate on. Some of them said, “O Rama, O Krishna, there is a nice palmyra grove close by. The trees are loaded

* In all the Puranas, in the Harivansa, and also in the Mahavarata, Krishna is held to be one of the best and the greatest songsters and musicians of his age. He was a genius in music, as he was in everything else.

† His playing on the pipe is one of the incidents of his life that is known even to a child in India.

with ripe fruits, the smell of which perfumes the air. But the grove is infested by an wild ass. None could venture near it. We like very much to taste some of these fruits; will you try to get us some ?”*

Rama and Krishna rose and went to the palmyra grove. It was but a moment's task for the very powerful Rama to kill the brute. He caught hold of its hind legs and hurled it round till it was dead. They then secured many fruits and came back to their play-mates.

* Vishnu Purana does not mention any names, but the Vagavata says the boys, named Sudama, Suvala and others, spoke of the fruits to Rama and Krishna. Harivansa, however, says that it was Krishna himself who proposed to get them.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT BANIAN TREE

THERE was a very gigantic Banian tree in one part of the forest.* In their rambles the boys discovered it one day, and since then it became the chief place of their meeting. When merry and playful, they played and sported underneath its extensive shade, and when tired and fatigued, they rested and slept under this grand sylvan canopy.

It stood covering a very large space of ground. It stood with many out-spreading branches, each of which had sent down innumerable off-shoots to the ground. Beautiful orchids of various charming colours hang from its overhanging boughs; creepers in flowers ran up entwining its branches; ferns in delightful groups lay near and about its stupendous trunk. Wild flowers in all the colours of the rainbow filled the air with their sweet

* This gigantic Banian tree has been called by all the Puranas as the great *Bhandira Bata*. It was certainly a ver remarkable tree.

fragrance. Birds from within its dense foliage sent forth their sweet melodious notes,—it was an exquisite sylvan bower which Nature had made with all the arts that She alone possessed.*

Underneath this grand tree, Krishna with his play-mates daily held various sports. They were exceedingly delightful, exciting and enticing, and drew innumerable boys from far and near. Whoever came was heartily welcomed by Krishna and his companions, and as time wore on, hundreds multiplied into thousands that followed Krishna as shadow follows the substance.†

Their sports were various. Sometimes they wrestled and sometimes they boxed; now they

* This description is taken from the Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 67th.

† The Puranas do not say that other boys besides the cow-herds used to come and join in the sports organized by Krishna. But by a careful study of them all, we have come to the conclusion that such was the case. Our readers will find in this chapter that one Pralamba was killed by Rama. He came and joined in the sport, though his presence was not noticed. If outsiders were not in the habit of coming to the sports, Pralamba would not have been able to pass unobserved by at least Krishna, who knew all his play-mates and all the cow-herd boys of the Vrindavana by name. Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVIII., Sloka 18, however, says that Krishna marked his presence from the beginning.

threw stones and now they fought with the wildest bull that was in their flock. Sometimes they held competitions in running, jumping and riding, and sometimes in swimming, rowing and diving. Often did Krishna divide the boys into two parties and organise a battle with all the requisites of war.* But they never fought in anger and vengeance and never fell out amongst themselves. No ill will was ever bred in that land of love and amity.†

One of his biographers goes on to say,—“One day having seen Krishna and Rama thus engaged

* Vishnu Purana. Part V, Sec. IX., says —“Those two highly powerful brothers engaged in exercises, in swinging upon the boughs of trees, in boxing and wrestling and in hurling stones.”

Harivansa, Vishnu Parva. Chapter 72nd, says,—“Those two lion-like heroes cheerfully engaged in various sorts of fights and warfare with the cow-herd boys.”

Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVIII., says, “Rama and Krishna engaged themselves sometimes in walking, sometimes in throwing stones, sometimes in dragging one another and sometimes in wrestling.”

Our readers will find later on that when Krishna became the great Prince of Mathura and Dwarka, he raised a great army from amongst these boys. In the great battle of Kurukshetra, these Gopa warriors, who were known by the name of *Sansaptakas*, were the ablest soldiers and the greatest heroes. See Mahavarata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter VII.

† See Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. IX.

in sports, the Asura Pralamba came there in the guise of a cow-herd boy with the intention of stealthily carrying them off into the deepest part of the forest where he could easily murder them. That chief of the Asuras, assuming a human shape, mixed with the boys unobserved and unsuspected.”*

“The boys were then playing at the game of leaping like deer,—two and two together. Krishna was matched with Sudama, and Rama with Pralamba. The rest were matched with the other boys, and they all went leaping along, two and two together. Krishna and Rama beat their respective adversaries. Then according to the rules of the play, the defeated boys began to carry their victors on their shoulders. They had thus to go for a certain number of times from the

* Except this Pralamba and Kaliya, all the other creatures that Krishna and Rama killed in the Vrindavana have been distinctly described in the Puranas as wild animals. But Pralamba has been described as an *Asura* and Kaliya as a *Naga*. All the Oriental scholars now agree in saying that the Danavas, Asuras, Nagas &c., of the Puranas were but the primitive peoples of India who were driven away by their Aryan invaders. Pralamba, therefore, evidently belonged to one of these races.

starting-place to the great Banian tree. When they were thus playing, Pralamba with Rama on his shoulders attempted to run away into the deep forest. "O Krishna," cried Rama, "I am carried off by a villain disguised as a cow-herd boy. Tell me, what should I do." Krishna laughed and said, "Do away with the villain by battering out his brains." No sooner were those words uttered, than Rama pressed Pralamba with his knees, and striking him on the head and face with his fists, he beat out his eyes and battered his brains down. Vomitting blood, Pralamba fell on the ground and died."*

* The Puranas describe many other encounters of Krishna with many other Asuras, described as birds and beasts. For fear of repetition, we do not describe them.

CHAPTER XI

THE INDRA YAGMA

THE rains had been over ; and the autumn with its clear, beautiful and bright sky appeared. The people of Vraja were, as usual, making grand preparations for their great annual festival. It was a Sacrifice in honour of Indra, their national God.*

* Indra-worship is the latest feature of the Vedic religion. Indra was not originally the chief God of the Aryans. In the earlier Riks of the Rig-Veda, his name is hardly met with. Varuna was then the chief God. The Greek *Uranus* and the Vedic *Varunas* are evidently the same deity. See (a) Grote's Greece, Vol. I., p. 6. and (b) Oxford Essays for 1856, p. 41.

The Rig-Veda, Mandala 5, Sukta 85, Rik 1, and Ibid, mandala I., Sukta 24, Rik 7, and also Gloss of Sayanacharjya on the Rig-Veda, Mandala 2, Sukta 89, Rik 3, bear out our assertion. It appears that Indra-worship was not introduced into India without a struggle. In many Mantras of the Rig-Veda, the very existence of Indra is doubted (Rig-Veda, 2-12-5). In many Mantras an apparent slight has been cast upon him (Rig-Veda 1-170-3). Again in many Mantras, men are abused as being not Indra-worshippers (Rig-Veda 1-133-1). But finally Indra became supreme, and Varuna became only a subordinate deity, *viz.* that of water. When

Seeing them busily and anxiously engaged in making preparations for a great festival, Krishna, out of curiosity, asked the elders, "What is this ceremony that you intend to perform?" They replied, "Indra is the lord of the clouds and water. At his bidding the clouds pour down water on earth, by which grain is produced, and on which we and other beings live. It is due to this that the cows bear calves, and give milk, and are happy and well-nourished. Whereon the clouds pour water, the earth is neither barren of corn, nor bare of verdure, nor is man stricken with hunger. Having drunk the milk of the earth by means of the rays of the sun, Indra, the giver of water, pours it down again on earth for the sustenance of all the worlds. For this reason, kings and princes offer sacrifices to Indra at the end of the rainy season ; and so also do we, and so do other people."*

Krishna was born, Indra was the chief God of the Aryans, but it will be found that he not only ignored the Indra-worship, but he sometimes denied the sanctity of the Vedas. See the Vagavata Gita, Chapter II., Slokas, 42-43, and also Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, Vol. I., pp. 85-86, and Part II., p. 389, and Max Muller's Science of Language, pp. 208-210.

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. V.

To them Krishna thus replied, "What have we to do with Indra? Cattle and mountains are our gods." Then turning to his father he said, "Father, we are neither tillers nor traders; we are but nomads, sojourning in the woods and in the forests. The kine are our main-stay; therefore the hills, the forests and the cows are our gods. He who enjoys benefits from one, but worships another never obtains prosperity in this life or in the life to come. Therefore let us celebrate a great Sacrifice in honour of the hill *Govardhana*. In this Sacrifice let us feed our kine and also all the poor and the destitute. Let us make ourselves merry in every way."*

So profound was the love, respect and regard of the Gopas for Krishna that they silently and submissively obeyed him. At his word they abandoned their forefather's religion, forsook their ancient rites, and followed him to the hill of *Govardhana* to worship Nature.†

* The speech of Krishna is almost word for word the same in the Vishnu Purana and Harivansa. The speech in the Vagavata is more elaborate and philosophical. We have given it in brief.

† As this story has found place in every Purana, we cannot reject it as a fiction. It is quite evident that the boy

Men, women and children assembled at the foot of the beautiful hill, and for three days* together there was nothing but merriment amongst the simple and happy nomads of the charming forest of *Vrindavana*. Kine and buffaloes were killed in hundreds,† goats and sheep were sacrificed in thousands, milk was gathered in abundance, and eatables of every description were collected from every part of that vast Gopa settlement.‡

Boys and girls in merry circles danced hand in hand; maidens and matrons sent forth their melodious voice; the Gopas filled the atmosphere with their sweet songs. Drums, trombones and

introduced a thoroughly new religion amongst the Gopas led by Nanda. Our readers will find later on that Krishna preached and introduced in the world the religion of—we can briefly describe it as—*worshipping Nature*, which is the visible manifestation of God, and *performing Duty*, which is the enjoined work of human life. His Sacrifice in honour of the hill and the cows was but the germ of the great religion that he preached in his later life.

* Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 73rd, says that the festival was continued for three days, but Vishnu Purana and Vagavata do not say any thing.

† See Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 73.

‡ All the Puranas say that when food was offered to the hill, Krishna ate it up, although the Gopas considered that the Govardhana in its own manifested form ate their offerings.

pipes were played, conchs were blown, incense was burnt, hymns were chanted and odes were sung,—it was a sea of merriment, enjoyment and happiness from beginning to end.

In this grand festivity Krishna was the central figure. He was the brilliant moon from which flowed the sweet and soft beams of bliss that played on the breast of the charming hill of *Govardhana*.

On the last day, the Gopas gathered their cattle and kine, and decorated them with all the art they possessed. Men, women and children in their gala dress, blowing their pipes and beating their drums, then began to circumambulate the great hill. Krishna walked at the head of this grand and wonderful procession. It was a magnificent sight,—the boy of ten led behind him a great clan to a land of joy, comfort and bliss.

Thus did he raise the Gopas from Nature's simplicity to Nature's sublimity. Thus did he bring in culture, civilisation and religion amongst men unlettered, wild and barbarous. Thus did he introduce Heaven's light where darkness of superstition reigned.*

* After describing this newly introduced Sacrifice, all the Puranas give an account of an extraordinary event, namely

It was an extraordinary event, and the Gopas were struck with astonishment and awe. They thus spoke to him, "Seeing your powers, we do not look upon you as human. O Krishna! the

Krishna's raising up the *Govardhana* hill and holding it for seven days on the tip of one of his fingers. It is mentioned even in the Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter LXI., Sloka 9. It says,—

"O Bhishma, in my opinion there is nothing wonderful in this man's holding for a week the *Govardhana* hill which is like an ant-hill."

It is said that Indra was enraged at the slight cast upon him by the Gopas thus performing a new Sacrifice. He, therefore, ordered his clouds to shower on for seven days and nights together. In this fearful inclemency of weather, the cow-herds suffered very much. Their cows and calves died by hundreds. To protect them from the rains, Krishna raised the hill and the Gopas took shelter under it. Indra then acknowledged his defeat, came to Krishna propitiated him with an ode and went away after making friends of him.

The *Govardhana* hill is still in existence ; it is not an ant-hill as Sisupala said. It is impossible to believe that a boy of ten years of age, or for the matter of that, any being in human form, could have raised it and held it on his finger. But the story is found in every Purana, even in the Mahavarata ; therefore we believe there is something in it which it is now impossible to make out. The following suggestions, however, might be made :—

(a) It is possible that there was a heavy down-pour when the Gopas were engaged in their new sacrifice, and that by

women, the children and the old are all pleased with you. Even all the celestials together cannot perform the deeds you have done. Be you a god, a demon, a Yaksha, a Gandharva, or whatever order of being you may,—we love and respect you, for you are our friend.”*

When they had finished, Krishna remained silent for some time as if greatly touched. Then he spoke thus to them, “If you are not ashamed of my relationship, if I have deserved your praise, then what need is there thus to discuss about me? If you have any love for me, if I merit your praise, then consider me as your friend. I am neither a god, nor a Gandharva, nor a Yaksha, nor a

some means adopted by Krishna,—it might be that he dug out a big cave in which the nomad people with their cattle and kine took shelter,—they were protected in this fearful inclemency of weather.

(b) It may be that it is but an allegory signifying that the Indra-worshippers, finding their God slighted, attacked the Gopas and made an attempt to destroy their new Sacrifice, and that Krishna in this armed attack protected the hill on which the Gopas took shelter.

Whatever it be, there is no doubt that something very extraordinary was done by him at this period of his life.

* The Vagavata says he was seven years of age at this period of his life, but Harivansa says he was ten.

demon. I am born as your friend, and you should not think otherwise of me." *

* The colloquy quoted above is taken from the Vishnu Purana. Harivansa also says that Krishna earnestly asked the Gopas not to consider him as anything else but one of them. He never gave himself out that he was any higher being than man. In the Mahavarata, Udyaga Parva, he says,—“ I have no claim to the miraculous or supernatural. I can but do what is possible in a man.”

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT DANCE

THE Autumn's beautiful moon had lighted up all the blossoming trees and plants of the charming *Vrindavana*. The ever pretty *Jamuna* in silvery ripples slowly rolled on ; delicious breezes blew over her waves scattering the sweetest fragrance ; the sweet notes of the pipes of the Gopa boys rose higher and higher till all appeared to be in a sea of blissful cadence. Nature's every beauty and sweetness had gathered round on the green grassy lawns of the ever beautiful land of the Gopas and the Gopinis.* All the boys and girls had assembled to join in a great dance,† which their

* Gopini means a female Gopa.

† The greatest poets and devotees of India have with great care described Srikrishna's this great dance called the *Rasha*. Therefore, *Vrindavana* and *Vrindavana's Krishna* and his maiden companions and their love, sports and dance, have taken a deep hold on the mind of the people of India. India's poetry, painting, music,—nay religion, all breathe this love, sports and dance of the Gopa maidens with their heart's idol, the ever-loving Krishna of the *Vrindavana*. Thousands of books have been written on this love-affair, and according

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beloved friend and leader Krishna had organised to be held in that beautiful moon-lit night. It was not the first dance. Often did Krishna organise many such moon-lit *feles* in which all the fair girls of the *Vrindavana* took the greatest pleasure in joining. They were as much mad after him as the boys. Each and every one of those innumerable pretty girls loved him with all the love that lay in their sweet, little innocent hearts. They were the personations of innocence and simplicity; they were but the creatures of the wilds and the forest; they were born in an age when the world had not been steeped in sin and sensuality. But they knew how to love, and they loved Krishna as only a woman's heart,

to the taste, feelings and capacity of the different poets, it has been variously described. In the Vishnu Purana, it is simply the pure love of the innocent and simple girls of the forest for an exceedingly handsome, accomplished and heroic boy. It is simply a great dance,—a great "Ball,"—which still exists among the nations of Europe. In Harivansa it is a maddening love of youthful maidens for a young man. In the Vagavata it is the deep sensual love of passionate and sprightly girls for a passionate youth. In the Brahma-Vaivarta Purana, it is gross carnality. Thus the merry dancing and playful sports of innocent, simple and loving boys and girls have in the course of time been turned into the grossest sensuality.

never touched by the world's frivolity, could possibly do.

His biographer* says :—"Seeing the clear sky, the autumnal moon, the air perfumed with the fragrance of the lilies, and the wood maddened with the hummings of the bees, Krishna desired to sport with the cow-herd girls. With Rama he began to sing in sweet, low strains and in those beautiful measures that women loved. As soon as they heard his song, they left their homes and hastened to meet him. A maiden gaily sang in accompaniment to his song ; another listened to his music with all attention ; one called him by name, but then shrank in bashfulness ; but another, bolder and more loving, pressed to his side."

His biographer then goes on :—"Going among them, Krishna conciliated some with gentle looks and some with shaking their hands. As each attempted to remain close to his side, the circle of the dance could not be formed. Therefore he took each by the hand, and when their eye-lids were closed by the effects of his touch, he formed

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XIII., Slokas 14-19.

the circle. They then began to dance in accompaniment to the songs in which they celebrated in the sweetest melody the beauty of the autumnal season. Krishna sang the song of the moon and her gentle rays,—the maidens, however, often chanted his praise. When leading, they followed him; when coming back, they met him; whether he went forward or backward, they always followed his foot-steps.”*

In these dances often did Krishna slip away from his play-mates and maiden companions. Missing him, the girls wildly roved about, seeking him from grove to grove. They exclaimed to one another, “Look, here are the impressions of Krishna’s feet! Some fortunate girl must have gone with him intoxicated in his love; her irregular foot-marks show it. Here did Krishna gather flowers for her from the high boughs of trees, for we find here only the marks of the tips of his toes. Because she felt vanity for his thus adoring her with flowers, Krishna must have left her here and gone away by this way; for behold, unable to follow his foot-steps as quickly as he went, she

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XII., Slokas 46-56.

has tripped along upon her toes! Being disappointed, she has returned by this way with faltering steps,—her foot-marks indicate it.”

Thus did he play and sport with the girls on the green grassy lawns and the beautiful shady groves of the *Vrindavana*. Thus did he impart to the simple life of the forest girls a new happiness and joy, a new enjoyment and pleasure, a new beauty and sublimity,—things they never knew before * By day he tended the kine and played with the boys, at night he held these sports in which the girls and the maidens of the Gopa settlement took the most prominent part. He loved them all; his love flowed like

* We have been obliged to reject the elaborate and poetical description of the Vagavata. Its description of this affair is quite an independent poem and, therefore, there is hardly anything historically reliable in it. It is, however, a most beautiful “poem” in its own way. It is perhaps one of the grandest paintings of devotional love,—the love of the human soul for the Supreme One. Vishnu Purana and Harivansa have described these sports only in a few lines, but the Vagavata describes it in no less than five chapters.

Two new incidents have been introduced by the Vagavata. They are, (1) Krishna’s removing the clothes of the maidens when they were bathing, and (2) some Brahmana women’s coming to Krishna to pay their adoration to him. Both are evidently Vagavata’s own creation.

the eternal Spring of Time. It was the grand manifestation of that love which is superhuman, celestial, nay divine.*

* We believe we are bound to state our reasons for saying that Krishna's love and dance were nothing but the innocent sports of merry boys and girls. It is so widely known as an affair of carnal love,—specially when some of the Puranas have described it as such,—that it would be impossible for us to convince all of our readers in a foot-note that it could not have been anything else but the simple sports of boys and girls. We shall, however, state some of our reasons, and we hope our readers will be at one with us when they will take them into their consideration.

(a) In the first place, our readers will find that Krishna was mere a boy when he left the Vrindavana for Mathura. It is admitted on all hands that he was only eleven years of age when these sports were held. We seriously ask our readers to say whether it is possible for a boy of eleven to entertain any idea of carnality.

(b) Secondly, when Krishna was most foully abused by Sisupala (Vide the Mahavarata, Sava Parva,) he was never charged by him with sensuality. If he really did what some of the Puranas wanted us to believe, he would not have been spared by Sisupala. Nowhere in the Mahavarata, which is a much earlier work than any of the Puranas, we find that he is described as a man of lewd character. The next earlier work, Vishnu-Purana, says nothing of it.

(c) Thirdly, in every work in which his career has been described,—even in those works that delight in painting him as a god of carnal love,—we find he has been called a *Jitendriya*, a man having his desires and passions subdued. See

And they too loved him with a fervour in which they had lost their self-existence. It was that grand divine love in which sensuality had no place,

Vagavata, Skanda X., Chap. 33rd, Slokas 26 and 30, and also the Upanishad Gopala Tapini.

(d) Fourthly, such dances were very popular amongst the Aryans at the age in which Krishna was born. There was nothing wrong in these amusements, and none was charged with carnality who joined in them. We find in the Mahavarata that the Kuru princes and princesses often held such dances. Even in Dwarka, Krishna and Rama had many such "balls," in which brothers and sisters, daughters and fathers, husbands and wives joined. See Harivansa, Chapter 146th, Slokas 16-18.

(e) Fifthly, *Rasha* means simply a "dance." Sridhara Swami, the great commentator of the Vagavata, thus explains the word. "It is a circular dance of men and women by holding one another's hands." In the Harivansa, the word *Rasha* is not used, but in its place the word *Hallisha* has been used. Now some of the great Sanskrit Lexicographers explain it thus, "It is the circular dance of women." We thus find no carnality was ever implied by a *Rasha* dance.

(f) Sixthly, in describing this affair, the Puranas have used the words *Ramayanti* and *Ratipriya*. These two words are now popularly believed to carry the sense of carnality, but we humbly suggest that they were never used in the Puranas in this sense in connection with the *Rasha* dance. The roots, *Rama* and *Rati*, both mean *to sport*. In this sense they are used in various Sanskrit works. See Harivansa, Chapter 67th, Slokas 24-26, and Markandeya Purana, Chapter 20th, Sloka 7. In the 67th Chapter of the Harivansa, the sports of the boys are described, and in

—in which the world's existence disappeared in a deep unfathomable ocean of blissful oblivion.*

these descriptions the words *Kamayanti* and *Ratipriya* often occur. We need not say in respect of the sports of the boys these two words convey no sense of carnality. If they mean simple sports in one place, why should they be given a different import in another place?

It might be asked why the Puranas and such great works as Joydeva's *Gita Govinda* thought it proper to describe Krishna as a god of carnal love. It would be presumptuous on our part to guess their intention, but we believe their object was to give the masses an idea of the grand divine love that a human soul feels for the great Supreme One by citing man's carnal love as an instance,—a love which is the strongest in the world among all men in general.

* We cannot conclude this chapter without mentioning Radha, the Gopa maiden, whose images are invariably to be seen by the side of Krishna all over India. At the present day the life of Krishna is indissolubly mixed up with that of Radha, who is said to be the wife of Ayana, his maternal uncle. But she is but a poetical creation. She is not to be found in the Mahavarata, or in Vishnu Purana, or Harivansa, or Vagavata. Perhaps she is the creation of the author of the original Brahma-Vaivarta Purana which is now lost. It is possible that the author of this Purana picked up one of the many Gopa maidens who sported with Krishna in the Vrindavana, and giving her a name, he painted her in the highest flight of poesy. Since then innumerable poets have used their great powers to develop the character of Radha. Her love for Krishna has been painted as the highest development of devotional love of the human soul for the Supreme One. Radha is now the grandest picture of *Devotion*. But we

CHAPTER XIII

DEPARTURE FOR MATHURA

It was impossible that the existence of Krishna in the Vrindavana could long remain unknown to the king Kansa in Mathura. Krishna's extraordinary exploits, his wide-spread popularity, his great fame soon reached his ears. He was told* that Krishna was none other than the very boy, Devaki's eighth son, whom he had made such strenuous efforts to destroy.

He foamed and roared in anger ; but he could do nothing now ; Krishna was beyond his reach.

must say that falling into the hands of poetasters, she has been often made to appear as a picture of sensuality.

In our opinion no particular Gopa maiden should be given a higher status than any of the others. Each and every one of them loved Krishna with her whole heart, and none surpassed the others in fervour. We believe the poet who created Radha had no such intention, for the real meaning of the word "*Radha*" is *an adorer*, for the root *Radha* which means *to adore*. Every Gopa girl was, therefore, a "Radha,"—an "adorer" of Krishna.

* Vishnu Purana, Part, V., Sec. XV., relates that it was Narada who informed Kansa that Krishna was the eighth child of Devaki.

He was the idol of the mighty Gopas who were ready to lay down their lives for him ; he was the leader of hundreds of brave boys who had flocked to him from all parts of the country,—boys that had been formed into a rude but a mighty army. He was now highly respected and greatly feared by the Nagas, who, at a signal from him. would hasten to his help.*

Kansa was fully aware of all this. He knew also that almost all his people believed Krishna to be their ordained saviour ; he knew the entire Yadu race would secretly,—and if necessary openly,—stand by him if occasion would arise. Under the circumstances an open attempt to kill Krishna would give rise to a serious rebellion in his kingdom. An united uprising of the Yadus, the Gopas and the Nagas would bring about his downfall and death. He, therefore, thought of encompassing Krishna's death by a stratagem.

He sent for one of the most powerful Yadu chiefs, named Akrura,† and thus addressed him,

* See Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 84th.

† Akrura was a great warrior amongst the Yadavas. In the Mahavarata and in all the other Puranas we find him a great friend of Krishna. He seemed to be of the same age as Krishna.

“O Akrura, you are my friend ; do me a friendly service. There is no such warm friend and well-wisher of mine amongst the Yadus and the Bhojas as you. Go to the settlement of Nanda where do the two sons of Vasudeva live. Bring them here without delay on this chariot. On their arrival, I shall cause them to be destroyed by elephants. If they escape, I shall have them put to death by powerful athletes. With their death, it would be easy to kill Vasudeva and all the other Vrisnis, Bhojas and Dasarahs. I shall also destroy my avaricious father Ugrasena, his brother Devaka and all others who are rebellious against me. Get them here by telling them that there will be held a grand tournament in which they should come and display their prowess.”*

But Kansa was disappointed even in Akrura. He too went over to the enemy's side.† He

* Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 36, Slokas 21-35.

† In the Sava Parva, Chapter XIV., Sloka 30, of the Mahavarata Krishna said to Judhisthira, “Having bestowed the daughter of Ahuka on Akrura, I with Valadeva killed Kansa and Sumalin (or Sunama) for the good of our relation.” We need not say this Ahuka was not the father of the old king of Mathura, Ugrasena. He was like Akrura a great Yadu warrior and a friend of Krishna.

apprised the Vrisnis of Kansa's intention, and when he arrived at the *Vrindavana*, he told the Gopas all about the nefarious conspiracy that had been made by Kansa to encompass the death of Krishna. A counter-plot was soon formed, not only to save the life of Krishna, but to make a final attempt to bring about the downfall of the cruel tyrant.

The cup of bitterness was full. They solemnly resolved that they would stand by Krishna and overthrow their persecutor, or die in the attempt. Krishna again and again assured them that he would kill Kansa and save them from his cruel persecutions.*

A secret communication passed from house to house. It reached the Gopas in the distant *Vrindavana*: it penetrated into the deepest forest and reached the Nagas in their wild settlements. All

* In Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XVIII., Krishna thus addressed Akrura, "I shall devise proper measures for this. Depend upon it that Kansa had been already killed. Rama and I will go to Mathura to-morrow. The Gopas will accompany us, carrying sufficient presents for the king."

In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 41st, Krishna said,—"O Akrura, I will go with my brother to your house, and by destroying the scourge of the Yadu race, I will promote the welfare of my relatives."

were asked to be on the alert, and to make a final stand to overthrow the great tyrant.

With Akrura, the two Vrisni princes started for Mathura. The Gopas in a large contingent accompanied them apparently to witness the tournament and to pay their annual tribute, but in reality to aid Krishna, should occasion arise. They were a strong body, and were not incapable of holding their own against the Aryans of Mathura.

Krishna and the Gopas encamped for the night outside the city. Some of them headed by Krishna and Rama entered Mathura after dusk. They had an affray with some of Kansa's men in the streets, but they proceeded on till they reached the king's arsenal. There they had another brush with the royal guards. They then retired to their camp where too they had a slight encounter with the king's soldiers who had pursued them.*

* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa, and Vagavata all relate that Krishna and Valarama met with Kansa's washerman in the streets of Mathura and they asked him in jest to give them some of the royal robes. The washerman abused them in return, in consequence of which a struggle ensued in which he was killed by Krishna. They then came across a hunch-backed girl, named Trivakra, who used to prepare perfumes for the king. They laughingly asked her to give them some of the royal perfumes which she gladly offered them. Vishnu

Thus passed the night. But Kansa over-looked all this with apparent graciousness. He was firmly convinced that Krishna would fall into the trap that had been laid by him for his destruction. He, therefore, anxiously and eagerly waited for the morrow.*

Purana, Part V., Sec. XX., says:—"Then Krishna, skilled in the healing art, took hold of her under the chin with his thumb and two fingers and lifted up her head, whilst with his feet he pressed down hers, and in this way he made her straight in stature, which made her appear handsome. Filled with love and admiration, she took Krishna by the garment and said, 'Do come to my house.' Krishna smiled and said, 'I shall come to your house some other time.' After dismissing her, he turned towards Rama and laughed aloud."

Out of this incident the Vagavata has built up a love story. But we must draw our readers' attention to the fact that Krishna was also a master in the healing art as he was in every thing else. Many instances of his cures will be found later on.

Krishna and the Gopa boys then proceeded on, and meeting a flower-seller, they asked him for some flowers which were gladly given to them. They then went to the royal arsenal where they had a struggle with the guards. See Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XX., Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 82, and Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 42.

* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa, and Vagavata relate that on his way to Mathura with Krishna and Rama, Akrura stopped the chariot and went to bathe in the *Jamuna*. He saw the majestic figure of Krishna beneath its water. From this the commentators of the Vagavata and the other writers

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEATH OF KANSA

THE morning dawned. The trumpets were sounded, the heralds shouted, and the bards sang. Thousands of men, women and children wended their way towards the arena in which the great tournament* would be held. It was a brilliant spectacle, and all Mathura was present.

of the Vaisnava sect say that the *perfect* incarnation of God did not take his birth in the womb of Devaki. When Vasudeva took Krishna, who was but a *partial* incarnation, to Nanda's house, he slipped from his hands and fell into the water of the *Jamuna*. Vasudeva immediately took him up again, but in fact Krishna remained there, and God (Vishnu) in Krishna's form came up to Vasudeva's lap. Since then Devaki's son lived in the water till the day when Akrura returned to the banks of the *Jamuna* with Vrindavana's Krishna who was the real and the perfect incarnation of God. They say Vishnu did not leave Gokula. Krishna, who was in the water and who was born in Devaki's womb, ascended the chariot and went to Mathura. Our readers may take this version for what it is worth.

* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata give almost a similar account of the death of Kansa. But much of their description is obviously fictitious. We have accepted only those portions of their accounts which appeared to be reliable.

The citizens assembled on the platforms set apart for them. The princes with the ministers and the courtiers occupied the royal seats. The judges of the game were seated in front of the king who sat apart, close by, on a lofty throne. Separate platforms had been constructed for the ladies of the palace where they sat, and the other women took their seats on the other platforms. Accommodation was allowed to Nanda and the Gopas in a separate platform at the end of which sat Akrura and Vasudeva. Every one was on the tip-toe of expectation for the appearance of Krishna and Rama.*

But the king had ordered his men to set upon Krishna an infuriated elephant† when he with his brother would make an attempt to enter the arena. An elephant was accordingly driven against them, but the two brothers, after a hard fight, killed the huge animal and entered the arena.

As soon as they made their appearance, the bugles were sounded, and Chanura and Mustika

* This tournament was called *Dhanurmuha*,—literally a trial of archery.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XX.

sprang forth defiantly slapping their arms. Covered with the blood of the elephant, Rama and Krishna majestically stepped forward like two proud young lions. Exclamations of surprise and pity rose all over the place. People cried aloud. "Alas! Alas!" Many exclaimed, "Are there no elders present here who will judge aright? Two delicate boys on one side, and two athletic fiends on the other!—Is this fair and just? It is a great sin for the umpires and the judges of the game to allow a contest between boys and strong men."

Coolly and calmly did Krishna step into the arena. He engaged with the highly powerful Chanura, and Valarama began to fight with the well-skilled wrestler, Mustika. Entwining and pushing and pulling and beating one another with fists, arms and elbows, they fought with one another till at last Chanura began gradually to lose his strength. At the sight of Krishna's gaining ground, Kansa roared in anger and ordered all music to stop.

After wrestling with Chanura for a long time, Krishna at last lifted him up and whirled him over his head. He whirled his adversary round and

round, till he became out of breath and died. He then dashed him on the ground like a piece of clay.

In the meanwhile Valarama had killed Mustika, and the other athletes had fled in fear. The two victorious boys then danced in the arena, dragging along with them the Gopa boys. Kansa became maddened with anger ; fire flashed from his eyes ; he roared aloud to his men, " Drive those two cow-herd boys from the arena. Seize the villain Nanda, and secure him with chains of iron. Put Vasudeva to death with tortures intolerable to his years. Seize the cattle and all that belongs to these cow-herds.

But not a soul stirred ; the order of the great king was for the first time disobeyed. He stared in anger and in fury, nay in fear at his people, but all stood still as statues.

Krishna sprang up to the place where Kansa was seated. He seized him by the hair of his head, hurled his crown to the ground, felled him down and threw himself upon him. After a hard struggle, he killed the great tyrant, and then dragged him into the centre of the arena.

Not a single soul amongst the many thousands that were present in the arena rose to the succour of

their great king. All sat motionless on their seats. Only Sumalin, his younger brother, came to his rescue,* but he was soon despatched by Valarama.

A deep and solemn silence reigned among the multitude, till at last the Gopa boys filled the sky with their loud cheers. They stood up in a body and sent up such a tremendous shout that in the distant *Vrindavana* the Gopa women started up and laid aside their household works. The people of Mathura outside the arena ran from all directions towards the palace to ascertain what the matter was.†

* The Vagavata says that eight or nine of his brothers came to his help, and they were all killed by Valarama.

† This is the account that Krishna himself gives of the death of Kansa in the Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chap. XIV., Slokas 30-34.

“The foolish Kansa, having persecuted the Yadavas, married two of the daughters of Jarasandha. They were named Asti and Prapti. Strengthened by this alliance, the fool persecuted his relatives and gained an ascendancy over them all. By his cruel acts he earned a very bad name. The wicked wretch persecuted the old chiefs of the Bhoja race. These chiefs sought our protection from the persecutions of their relative Kansa. Having bestowed upon Akrura the beautiful daughter of Ahuka, named Satarnika, I did a service to my relatives. I killed both Kansa and Sumalin with the assistance of Rama.”

CHAPTER XV

KRISHNA AS A PRINCE

WHEN the Gopas were again and again cheering Krishna for the great deed he had done, instead of feeling joy and delight, he felt the greatest possible pain. The heart-rending lamentations of Kansa's mother and wives, of his children and relatives, nay of his old father Ugrasena, made his heart bleed. One of his biographers says :—" Krishna expressed his regret for what had happened, and with eyes saturated with tears, he consoled them."* Another says :—" Surrounded by the Yadus, Krishna expressed his regret for killing Kansa. Moved by the loud wailings of Kansa's wives, he wept."†

When the great tempest that had been raised had a little abated, and the excitement of the people had cooled down, and the great commotion for the sudden death of Kansa had subsided,

* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XXI.

† Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 87th.

Krishna then took upon himself the task of settling the affairs of the Yadus that had become unsettled by the sudden death of their king. He ordered a royal funeral* for Kansa and his

* To give our readers some idea of the nature of the ceremony of a royal funeral of that age, we quote below the Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter CXXVII., Slokas 5-23, in which the funeral of Pandu, the Kuru prince, has been described. "The priests went out of the city carrying the fragrant and blazing sacred fire, fed with *Ghee*. Friends, relatives, and adherents, wrapping up the corpse with cloth, decked it with flowers and sprinkled over it various perfumes. They adorned the bier with garlands and rich hangings. Then placing the body of the king on that excellent bier, they caused it to be carried on the shoulders of men. With the white umbrella held over the bier, with waving *Chamaras*, with the sounds of various musical instruments, the whole scene looked bright and grand. Many hundreds of men distributed gems among the crowd. The priests, clad in white walked in front of the procession, pouring libations of *Ghee* on the sacred fire which blazed in an ornamental vessel. They at last came to a charming and sacred wood on the bank of the Ganges. There did they lay down the bier. They then besmeared the body with all kinds of perfumes. They brought water in many golden vessels and washed the body. They then again smeared it with white sandal-paste, and with *Kala-agaru* mixed with *Tungarasha* (a kind of perfume). Having dressed the body in a white robe, they placed the king on the funeral pyre. They then set fire to it and burnt the body with the fragrant *Sandal* wood which was besmeared with *Tungpada* and other perfumes."

brother; he did every thing possible to mitigate the sorrow and the grief of Kansa's family.

He then went to his father and mother and made obeisance to them. He made every effort to make every one happy; he sent messengers to the Vrisnis, Dasarahs, Yadus, Vojas and others who had left Mathura through the persecutions of Kansa.* He then made the necessary arrangements to place the venerable Yadu chief, Ugrasena, the deposed father of Kansa, on the throne of Mathura.† But the old chief declined the offer and earnestly asked Krishna to occupy the throne

* Only the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 48th, says that Krishna sent Akrura to enquire after the welfare of the sons of his paternal aunt Pritha (Kunti), who were the illustrious Pandavas.

† We need not say that at the time of which we speak, it was the practice with the destroyer of a king to ascend the throne of his victim. In the annals of ancient India we find none who did not avail himself of this privilege except Krishna. For a cow-herd boy to withstand the great temptation of becoming a king and to refuse the supplications of the whole Yadu race bespoke a strong will. Our readers must remember that Krishna was only twelve years of age when he killed Kansa. The Bhagavata distinctly says,—this assertion is borne out by all its great commentators,—that Krishna killed Kansa on the 14th Lunar day of the month of Falguna (about 1st week of March) when he was in his twelfth year.

rendered vacant by the death of Kansa. The entire Yadu race entreated him to accede to the request of the old king. But Krishna said, "Neither have I any necessity for a kingdom, nor do I desire a throne. I have not killed Kansa with the motive of becoming a king. For the good of the world, your son, who became the scourge of the race, has been killed by me. I shall again be a dweller of the forest and rove happily amongst the cowherds and the kine. O king, I again and again say, I have neither any need of a kingdom, nor any desire for it."* He listened to no refusal, and the old king was duly installed by him on the ancient throne of the Vrisni race.† Krishna then left the city to the great regret of all the people.

But he did not return to his old favourite forest of the *Vrindavana*; he did not go back amongst the loving boys and girls of Vraja, nor to his beloved mother Jasoda and his ever fond father Nanda. Bowing down his head to the Gopa chief and all

* Harivansa, Vishnu Parva. Chapter 88th.

† The original kings of Mathura were the Vrisnis, who were precluded by a curse from ascending the throne. It went over to the female side, and their sister's sons were made kings. Thus Ugrasena and his family came to rule over the Yadu race.

the other revered elders, and providing them with much wealth and many presents, he took leave of them. He implored their blessings, and asked them to go back to their settlement. He then turned towards his play-mates who stood with tears in their eyes. He embraced them all and asked them to return to the beautiful *Vrindavana*. "If you love me," said he, "go back to our happy woods. Make my mother Jasoda forget my absence. Play and sport with the girls as I used to do. Let them not feel that I am away. Tell them I am still to them as I were before, but duty calls me elsewhere."

He left Mathura and went far and far away to distant Kasi,* there to begin his education. He and his brother Rama attached themselves to the household of the venerable preceptor named Sandipani,† who lived at a place called

* Modern Benares.

† All the Puranas say that Krishna was under the tuition of Sandipani only for sixty-four days. It is said that within this short time he mastered all the Sciences. They also narrate a story in which Krishna is said to have rescued Sandipani's son from a sea-demon, named Panchanjanya. Krishna obtained a conch from this demon which afterwards became his great war-conch.

Avantipur.* They then began to study both the Vedas and the Science of Arms.

* This is not all the education that Krishna received. All through the Mahavarata, not to speak of the later Puranas, we find him described as one of the most learned men of his age. In the Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter 38th, Sloka 19, Bhishma says,—“ He is vastly learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas.” In Chhandogya-Upanishad,—a very ancient work (see Introduction)—we meet with this passage : “Ghora (Rishi) of the family of Angirasha, saying all this to Devaki’s son. Krishna, added, ‘ In the end remember these three things.’ This evidently shows that Krishna studied under the Rishi Ghora. In the Mahavarata we find that he performed *Tapasya* for ten years on the Himalayas. In those days *Tapasya* did not mean practising austerities. It meant study and meditation. See Satapata Brahmana, Valli 2, Anuvaka 6.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WAR WITH JARASANDHA

KRISHNA and Rama could not continue their study long ; they were soon sent for by their relatives, because a great danger threatened the city of the Vrisnis. The great and mighty Jarasandha, the father-in-law of Kansa, had marched against Mathura with a large army. In this great crisis, the Yadus and the Vrisnis had none to save them except their ever-ordained saviour Krishna.

Jarasandha was then the paramount lord of Northern India.* It is said that he commanded twenty *akshauhini*† of soldiers,—a stupendous

* From the earliest to the recent days it is found that one or the other sovereign of India became the paramount lord over the others. In later days, such Emperors were Chandra Gupta, Vikramaditya, Asoka and others.

† One chariot, one elephant, five foot-soldiers and three horse-men form a *Patti*. Three *Pattis* make a *Senamukha* ; three *Senamukhas* make a *Gulma* ; three *Gulmas* make a *Gana* ; three *Ganas* make a *Bahini* ; three *Bahinis* make a *Pritana* ; three *Pritanas* make a *Chamu* ; three *Chamus* make an *Anikini* ; ten *Anikinis* make one *Akshauhini*. Thus one *Akshauhini* would consist of 21870 chariots, 21370 elephants,

army.* All the chiefs and potentates, all the kings and princes, acknowledged his sovereignty,† either by paying him tribute or by obeying his commands ; or by assisting him with soldiers in time of war. He was a powerful sovereign and ruled with an iron hand.‡

109350 foot-soldiers and 65610 horse-men. It is said that Jarasandha commanded twenty times this number.

* Sisupala, the king of Chedi, was the Generalissimo of this great army.

† Krishna thus spoke to Judhisthira in the Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Slokas 8-22.

“ Having overcome the entire Kshatriya order, Jarasandha has put himself up over the head of all the kings. The powerful Sisupala has become his Commander-in-Chief. Bakra, the powerful king of the Kurushas, also waits upon him as his disciple. The king of the Yavanas, who has chastised Mura and Naraka, who is the most powerful king of the West, who is named Bhagadatta, has also bowed to Jarasandha in submission. The powerful king of Banga, Paundra and Kirata, who is known by the name of Paundraka, also waits upon him. That mighty king of the Bhojas, Bhismaka, who is our relative and who rules over the fourth part of the world, has become a servitor of the king of Magadha.

‡ The Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Sloka 63, says :—“ Many kings have been kept prisoners in Girivraja (his city) to be offered by Jarasandha as sacrifices in a great Yajma.”

Learning that his favourite son-in-law* had been murdered by Krishna supported by all the Vrisnis, Jarasandha's anger knew no bounds. Without the least delay he started with a large army, vowing complete destruction of Mathura and the total annihilation of the entire Yadu race. But Mathura was long way off from Magadha, and therefore the irascible monarch, heavily encumbered as he was in his march with a large army, took many months to arrive at the Vrisni capital.

In the meanwhile Krishna had returned from Avantipur, and with the small army that the Vrisnis commanded, he had made every preparation to defend the city. For days together the great Magadha king lay encamped round the city, besieging its citadel, but Krishna's supreme generalship and judicious manœuvre of his little army saved the city from falling into the hands of the enemy. Worn out and disgusted, the great king at last raised the siege and returned to his own country.†

* Kansa married the two daughters of Jarasandha, named Prapti and Asti.

† In ancient India real generalship was unknown. Every warrior was pre-eminent for his own bravery, physical strength

It would be better if we quote Krishna's own words. He thus describes his war with Jarasandha.*

“Jarasandha took up arms against us. We, eighteen branches of the Yadava race, consulted together and came to the conclusion that if we continued to strike our enemy for one hundred years, we should not be able to do him least harm. He had two friends; they were as powerful as the foremost of all powerful men. They were named Hansa and Dimvaka. But there was also another very great king named Hansa who was killed by Rama in a battle which raged for eighteen days. On hearing the rumoured death of Hansa, Dimvaka thought that he could not live without him, and therefore he went to the *Jamuna* and drowned himself. When Hansa heard what Dimvaka had done, he also put an end to his life by similar means. On hearing the death of the two great pillars of his empire, Jarasandha raised the siege

and the knowledge of arms. They knew not how to face a great warrior or a great army with a small force. Our readers will find that it was Krishna who introduced in India real generalship in his war with great Jarasandha. He was a great general as well as a great warrior.

* Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Slokas 35-45

of Mathura and went back to Magadha in great sorrow."

But the Vrisnis and the Yadus were not allowed any respite. They learnt that Jarasandha had fitted up another great expedition against them. He had invited the great Yavana* king to aid him in the destruction of Mathura and in the annihila-

* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata says that Jarasandha invaded Mathura eighteen times, and was on every occasion defeated. They relate that in his last invasion he invited the great Yavana (supposed to be Greek) king named Kala Yavana, to come to his aid. This king besieged Mathura with a very large army ; but Krishna separated him by a stratagem from his troops and led him alone into a cave where, it is said, a great Rishi, named Muchhakunda, was asleep. Kala Yavana in the darkness took him to be Krishna and gave him a kick. The Rishi awoke, fire flashed from his eyes in anger, and the Yavana king was reduced to ashes. The description of the war is very elaborate both in the Vishnu Purana and Harivansa. The Vagavata says that when Krishna and Rama were returning after encompassing the death of Kala Yavana, they were attacked on the way by Jarasandha. They both fled and took shelter on the Pravarsana hill to which Jarasandha set fire. The two brothers leaped from the hill and escaped to Dwarka. Harivansa calls the hill by the name of Gomata.

As there is hardly any historical value of these accounts of the Purans, we have rejected them. The account of the war given in the Mahavarata as quoted above appears to be based on facts.

tion of the Yadu race. They were filled with great alarm ; and they knew not what to do. They were but a few in number ; if they fought with Jarasandha for one hundred years, they would hardly be able to weaken his power, whereas their number would daily decrease till they would be totally annihilated. Krishna was very averse to bloodshed :—on the present occasion it would be useless and unwise. He, therefore, advised the Yadus to leave Mathura and take shelter in a place where they would be out of the reach of Jarasandha and where they would be able to live in peace and security. We again quote his own words :—

“We became exceedingly discouraged and prepared to fly. We divided our great wealth into small portions to make it portable. We then fled through fear of Jarasandha with our sons, cousins and relatives. We fled towards the west. There was a charming city named Kushasthali* adorned

* Kushasthali was in Guzerat. The new city Daravati or Dwarka was founded by Krishna on a small island in the sea, protected by a hill called Raivataka on the main-land. Perhaps no place could have been more impregnable. It was also exceedingly charming in point of natural beauty. Being surrounded on all sides by the sea, its climate was very

by the Raivataka mountain. In this city we took up our abode. We repaired its fort and made it so impregnable that even women could defend it. Though quite capable of protecting ourselves, yet we have taken shelter in the Gomata mountain. Twentyone posts of armed men are placed there, and the heroes of the eighteen branches of the Yadu race always defend it."*

Thus did Krishna bring the great Yadu clan many hundred miles away from their forefather's land. He brought them across deserts, mountains, rivers and streamlets to the coast of the sea. He founded for them a new city which was, as he himself said, "impregnable even to the celestials." He built a chain of forts on the Raivataka mountain to protect the city from all external attacks. He introduced amongst them a system of government far superior to what then existed in any part

salubrious. It lay also very close to the place of the greatest pilgrimage of that age, named *Provata*.

Dwarka is even to-day, like Mathura and Vrindavana, a great Hindu shrine, though nothing of the ancient city is now in existence; only the steeple of a temple is visible in the midst of the sea. It is mentioned in the Puranas that after Krishna's death the city was engulfed in the sea.

* See Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Slokas 48-55.

of India. He formed an army of his old play-mates, his beloved cow-herd boys of the Vrindavana, who became afterwards the foremost warriors in India and were famous in the name of *Sansaptakas*.* Thus did he raise the Yadu race to a higher strata of civilisation than that of any other Aryan race then living on the plains of India.†

* See Mahavarata, Drona Parva, the battle between Arjuna and the Sansaptakas.

† See Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 114th.

CHAPTER XVII

KRISHNA IN DWARKA

AFTER settling in Dwarka,* Krishna married the Princess of Vidharva,† named Rukmini, whom he loved and who loved him‡ But his marriage was not celebrated in peace. The powerful king of Vidharva, Bhismaka, refused to bestow his daughter on the Vrisni prince, and under the advice or dictates of the great Jarasandha, he made arrangements to marry Rukmini to the king of Chedi, Sisupala,§ who was the generalissimo of Jarasandha's great army.

* It is a pity that the authors of the Puranas have not described Krishna's career in Dwarka as fully as they have done his career in the Vrindavana. They have no doubt related innumerable matters, but they are so obviously fictitious that it would be useless to discuss them. We shall, therefore, give in this chapter the little that we have been able to gather from this great mass of fictions.

† Modern Berar.

‡ The Vagavata says Rukmini sent a messenger to Krishna. Bhismaka was a Bhoja, and therefore a kinsman of Krishna.

§ Sisupala was Krishna's cousin. He was the son of his aunt (father's sister).

But Krishna with the Vrisnis went to Vidharva, and when the princess was on her way back to the palace from a temple, he took her up on his chariot and drove away with all speed towards Dwarka.* Bhismaka's wrathful son, Rukmi, pursued him with a large army. After a hot chase

* In the age of which we are speaking, the marriage of the royal princesses of the Aryan race used to take place only in two ways, namely (a) *Sayamvara* (self-choice), and (b) *Harana* (forcible taking away). In *Sayamvara* all the great princes were invited, and the maiden made her own choice from amongst them. But the bride's father often contrived something to test the heroism of the several princes present, and thus he gave away his daughter to the best man. An instance of this will be found later on in Draupadi's *Sayamvara*. But when a *Sayamvara* was not held, or when both the prince and the princess thought that they would not be able to secure the man or the woman after their heart, then a prince would carry away a princess by force,—force being used not against the maiden, but against those who would oppose him. It was considered by the Aryan princes of that age to be the best method of marriage, for in this case they had the opportunity to display their prowess. Sometimes princesses were carried away from the *Sayamvara* assemblies. The great Bhishma carried away from the *Sayamvara* assembly the two princesses of Kasi in order to get them married to his younger brothers. (See Mahavarata, Adi Parva.)

In case of *Harana*, the maidens were generally found to be in love with the heroes who carried them away. Rukmini was in love with Krishna. In fact it is only the modern run-

he overtook him, and when Krishna found that the Vidharva prince had already come up with him, he stopped his chariot and gave him battle. After a severe fight Rukmi was defeated and his army utterly routed. Krishna then drove away to his own city, but the Vidharva prince remained on the field of battle,* vowing never to return to his kingdom till he could wreak his vengeance upon Krishna.†

away marriage. This sort of marriage was also recognised in the sacred books as being highly meritorious. The Rig-Veda, Mandala 10, Sukta 27, Rik II. says :—"Who is there who desires to possess the daughter of one whose daughter has no sight ? Is there any who will throw the *meni* (a sort of weapon) against one who carries away such a maiden ?"

* It is said Rukmi found a city on this field of battle and named it Bhojakata.

† We believe we are bound to say something more about Krishna's marriages. Vishnu Purana, Part IV., Chapter XV., Sloka 85, says, "Krishna had sixteen thousand one hundred and one wives." Again in Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XXVIII., we find that he had "sixteen thousand and seven wives." In the same work, Part IV., Chapter XV., it is mentioned that he had "one thousand four hundred and forty sons."

Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Bhagavata, relate that eight were the chief wives of Krishna,—namely (1) Rukmini, (2) Satyabhama, (3) Jamvavati, (4) Kalindi, (5) Mitravinda, (6) Satya, (7) Vadra and (8) Lakshana. But in this matter they say innumerable contradictory things. In the

Notwithstanding Krishna's towering personality, his loving nature and sweet character, there was no unity, good will, or brotherhood among

Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XXVIII., we get nine chief wives of Krishna including Rukmini. In Chapter 32, of the same work, we meet with another list of the chief wives of Krishna in which some new additional names are found. In Part IV., Chapter XV., of the same work, we get another additional name. In Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 15th, we get nine names in addition to Rukmini, but in Chapter 162nd of the same work, we meet with twelve names in addition to Rukmini. A few lines further down in the same chapter of the same work, we get five more additional names.

Except Rukmini and Satyabhama none of these wives ever appear on the scene of action. Satyabhama appears only once or twice, but those places of the Puranas or the Mahavarata in which she appears are apparently interpolations. (See our notes later on). Again none of the sons of these wives, except those of Rukmini and Janvavati, is to be met with in any period of Krishna's life. Janvavati was a bear's daughter, and therefore it is impossible to believe that she gave birth to a human being. It is said this son, Samba, carried away the daughter of Durjadhana named Lakshana. This story is mentioned only in the Puranas; no mention is made of it in the Mahavarata. If this story had any truth in it, it must have a place in the Mahavarata which is the history of Durjadhana and the Kurus. Rukmini's son Pradumna, however, is present all through Krishna's career. It is his grandson, Vajra, who finally ascended the throne of the Vrisnis. Under the circumstances we shall not be very wrong if we doubt the very existence of any other wives of Krishna except Rukmini.

the various clans of the Yadu race. Though they obeyed and followed Krishna, either through love or fear, they could not live in peace with one another. Their ancient feud was kept up, and they quarrelled on inspite of Krishna's presence and his continued effort to inspire love and amity among them. This is what he himself said, "I live as a slave of my relatives and hear their harsh words, though I gave them away half of my wealth. My heart ever bleeds at the cruel abuses of my kinsmen. Valadeva, Gada, Sukumara and my son, Pradumna, have become famous in the world on account of their personal beauty. The Andhakas and the Vrisnis are highly powerful, energetic and heroic. Those whom they do not aid are sure to perish and those whom they aid are sure to acquire immense wealth. But inspite of these powerful men holding to my side, I am passing my time as one utterly helpless and destitute. Ahuka and Akrura are my warm friends, but if I express love towards one, the other gets angry, therefore do I express love towards neither. It is very difficult to abandon Ahuka and Akrura for the great friendship that I bear for them."*

* The Mahavarata, Santi Parva.

The following story will give us a very clear idea of the internal condition of the Yadu race when they lived in Dwarka.*

A great quarrel broke out amongst the Yadus on account of a gem called *Samantaka*. One of their chiefs named Satrajita obtained it, but Krishna thought that it should be possessed only by the head of their clan, namely, king Ugrasena. But he did not speak it out, nor did he ask for it, for he feared it would add fuel to the fire of the great feud that always raged among the Yadavas. Satrajita, however, was afraid of losing it, and therefore he presented it to his brother, Prasena, who was a great warrior, believing that he would be able to retain it in spite of Krishna's desire to take it away.

Once upon a time Prasena went out in a hunting excursion, but he never returned. He was killed by a lion in the deepest part of the forest, and as he wore the jewel at the time, it was lost with him. But suspicion fell on Krishna. Many believed that it was Krishna who had murdered Prasena and stolen the gem.

* This story is given in the Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Bhagavata.

To remove this great stigma, Krishna tried to find out where the jewel was. He went out alone into the forest, and after a diligent search, found the gem and returned with it to Dwarka. Calling a meeting of all his kinsmen, he handed the gem over to Satrajita in the presence of all.*

* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Bhagavata relate that on going to find out the gem, Krishna saw that it was with a bear, named Jamvavana. He fought with him and defeated him. Thereupon the bear gave him back the gem along with his daughter Jamvavati whom Krishna married. On his return to Dwarka, he gave the gem to Satrajita who, in order to propitiate him, bestowed upon him his beautiful daughter named Satyabhama.

We believe it would be better if we quote here a passage that relates the other marriages of Krishna. The Bhagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 58th, says:—“One day Krishna and Arjuna came to the banks of the *Jamuna* where they met with a most handsome damsel. On Arjuna's asking her, ‘O beautiful maiden, who are you, whose daughter and whose wife?’ She replied, ‘I am the daughter of the exalted Sun. I live in a place underneath the waters of the *Jamuna*. I am practising hard austerities so that I might be the wife of Vishnu.’ On hearing her words, Krishna brought her to Indraprastha and married her with due ceremonies. Vinda and Anu-Vinda were the allies of Duryodhana. They had a beautiful sister named Mitravinda who offered the nuptial garland to Krishna, but her brothers refused to bestow her on him. Thereupon Krishna carried her away by force. The king of Kosala, Nagnajāt, had a very handsome daughter named Satya, but he declared that he would give his daughters

But the fatal jewel soon brought about Satrajita's death. One Satadhanya murdered him when he was asleep, and stole it. When Krishna heard of this most diabolical and cold-blooded murder, he, as the leader of the Yadus, was obliged to take serious notice of Satadhanya's conduct and to pass upon him the capital sentence. But Satadhanya, after having secretly handed over the gem to Akrura, fled from Dwarka on a fleet steed. Krishna and Rama pursued him, and after a hot chase when they came up with him, Satadhanya jumped down from his horse which fell dead through excessive exhaustion, and he then fled into the forest. Krishna got down from his chariot and ran after him. When Satadhanya saw that escape was impossible, he drew his sword. A fight ensued in which Satadhanya was killed. But when Krishna searched his person, he did not find the gem. On his return to the chariot, he told this to Valarama who did not believe it. He said with

to him only, who would be able to chastise the furious bulls that he possessed. Krishna went to Kosala beat the bulls, and married the maiden. After this, Krishna married his cousin, Vadra, the princess of Kakeya and then carried away Lakshana, the beautiful princess of Madra."

great scorn, "Fie to you ! You are very avaricious. You have stolen the gem. I will never go back to Dwarka." Saying this, the wrathful Rama went away to Videha* where he lived for three years.

In the meanwhile Akrura fled from Dwarka. Krishna on his return had not the slightest doubt that the jewel was with him. He therefore again and again asked him to come back, but Akrura did not. At last he was prevailed upon to come. On his arrival, Krishna convened a meeting of his kinsmen, and in the presence of all asked Akrura to admit that the jewel was with him. Finding that denial would be useless, Akrura handed the gem to Krishna. Many of the Yadu chiefs, including Rama, clamoured to have it, but Krishna turned a deaf ear to all their importunities and returned the gem to Akrura, saying that he was the fittest person among them all to wear it.

Thus did Krishna preserve internal peace in the Vrisni city and kingdom amongst men who were ever arrogant and proud, wild and vicious,—men who had grown excessively haughty on account of the very high position that their kinsman Krishna held in all India, and for which they too received

* Modern North Behar.

the highest homages from all,—men who finally exterminated themselves from their own internal dissensions.

But Krishna had also to contend against foreign foes. He had to defend his city more than once against external attacks.* He had to go out many times to fight against tyrannical kings.† But as

* See Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XLV.

† In the Mahavarata, Harivansa, Vishnu Purana and other Puranas there are many accounts of Krishna's various wars. But they are narratives, full of extraordinary descriptions; and it would be mere waste of time to make an attempt to pick up from them any historical facts. We shall, therefore, simply mention them here.

(a) War with Naraka.

Naraka was supposed to be the son of Earth. He was a great demon, and he kept imprisoned in his harem sixteen thousand women who were all finally rescued by Krishna. It is said Krishna married them all.

(b) War with Salya.

This king had a city which is said to have floated in the sky. He fought with Krishna with the power of illusion, but was finally beheaded by him.

(c) War with Paundra king Vasudeva.

This king assumed the *role* of Krishna, *i.e.* he gave out that he was the real incarnation of Vishnu and that the Vrisni Prince was an impostor. Krishna invaded his kingdom, killed him, and burnt Kasi, (Benares) the king of which came to the aid of Vasudeva.

(d) War with king Bana.

will be found later on, he was ever averse to war and blood-shed. If a battle was to be fought in order to punish a tyrant or to protect the people from wrong or oppression, if it were a righteous battle, he was never slow to take up arms. And if he ever took up arms, he was never defeated; he was ever invincible and ever victorious.

But what sort of life did he himself lead? We shall quote one of his biographers.* "One day Krishna thus spoke to his wife Rukmini, 'O princess, many highly powerful, mighty, wealthy and handsome monarchs sought your hand. The great Sisupala was present with the view of possessing you; your father and brother also wished to bestow you upon him. Why then abandoning such desirable matches, you wanted to marry a person like myself? I have taken

This king refused to bestow his daughter on Krishna's grandson Anurudhya, in consequence of which Krishna attacked him and defeated him after a great battle. It is said Bana had one thousand arms.

In the Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, it is mentioned that he conquered the western countries and invaded the Pragjotisha.

Bhagavata and Harivansa relate many more battles and wars fought by Krishna.

* Bhagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 60th, Slokas 10-20.

shelter in the sea for the fear of other kings; I have quarrelled with the strong and abandoned all royal prerogatives. If women follow men whose conduct is not to be understood and who do not remain under female control, they are sure to meet with great misery. We are poor and the poor only love us. Friendship and marriage can take place among those whose lineage, wealth, prowess and beauty are similar. Friendship and marriage can never take place between the high and the low. You have little experience. Ignorant of what I now say, you married such a worthless man as I am. I am indifferent both to my home and to my body. I have no desire for wife, son, or riches. I am happy in my own self.”*

* Here we take leave of Pauranic Krishna, *i.e.* Krishna as described by the Puranas. They have written many things more about Krishna, but as there is no historical value in these accounts, we have passed them over. Henceforth we shall place before our readers Krishna as described in the Mahavarata.

CHAPTER XVIII

KURU-PANCHALA

WHEN Krishna and the Yadavas firmly established themselves in Dwarka, a great event took place in Northern India. It was the *Sayamvara** of the Panchala princess, named Draupadi.

Kurujangala and Panchala† were two of the most important kingdoms in the Aryavarta.‡ The two kingdoms were contiguous to each other, and they were inhabited by two very powerful Aryan clans called the Kurus and the Panchalas. These two great clans rose from the same stock,§ and they originally lived together and called themselves by the same name. But for some

* See our note in P. 68.

† Kurujangala is modern Delhi and Panchala, modern Garhwal.

‡ We quote a sloka from the *Manu Samhita*, Chapter II.

“The country bounded by the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhya on the south, by the eastern sea on the east and the western sea on the west is known to the learned by the name of Aryavarta.”

§ The compound word “Kuru-Panchala” is often met with in the Vedas.

reason or other, which it is now impossible to guess, they quarrelled amongst themselves, and separated. Some settled in Kurujangala and some in Panchala. But their feud was deep-rooted and their quarrel never ceased. Both clans went on fighting from generation to generation till at last they were almost annihilated in the great battle which they fought on the field of Kurukshetra.*

At the time of which we speak, Dhritarashtra was the king of the Kurus, but he being blind, the administration rested on his uncle, Bhishma, who was the greatest warrior and statesman of that age. The throne should have been occupied by Bhishma, but he had long ago foregone his claims in favour of his younger brothers. His father Santanu fell in love with a fisherman's daughter named Satyawati,† but the fisherman refused to bestow his daughter on the king unless he

* See Aisika Parva, Mahavarata, and Part II, this work.

† She had another name; it was Matsagandha. It is said that because the smell of fish emanated from her body, she bore this name. One day she was met by the great sage Parasara, and as she allowed him the embrace, she was relieved of the smell through the Rishi's grace. The fruit of this embrace was the great sage Vyasa, who was named Krishna Dwaipayana, because he was born on an island.

would take a vow to make her son his successor. When Bhishma came to learn what had happened, he went to the fisherman and took a vow never to occupy the throne nor to marry, so that the throne might for ever be occupied by Satyavati's sons and their descendants.

Satyavati gave birth to two sons, but both of them died childless, leaving two young widows behind. King Santanu had long been dead; Bhishma by his vow was precluded from marrying; thus was the great Kuru dynasty on the point of becoming extinct. It therefore became necessary to have a child begotten of the widowed princesses. Under such exigencies the Aryans of that age had the custom of having children begotten on widows by the brothers of their husbands.* Satyavati had a *Kanin* son.† He was the great sage Vyasa, the celebrated compiler of the Vedas and the great writer of the original

* It was a prevalent custom in that age. We quote the Rig-Veda, 10th Mandala, 40th Sukta, 2nd Rik.

“As widows attract their husband's younger brothers to their beds, or as women attract men, so who does attract you, (O Aswins) ?”

† A son born of a woman before her marriage was called a *Kanin* son. See Manu Sanhita, 9-17 .

*Purana and Itihasa.** He was appealed to, and he begot successively three sons, two on the princesses and one on a hand-maid of theirs† The eldest was Dhritarashtra, the next was Pandu and the youngest was Vidura.

Dhritarashtra married the princess of Gandhara‡ named Gandhari; Pandu married two wives, Pritha§ and Madri. The elder prince being blind, the younger Pandu ascended the throne. Both brothers lived for some time in great amity, but it appeared they could not long pull on. Pandu left Kurujangala, and went away to the Himalayas with his wives and retainers. Thus another new clan branched off from the Kurus which afterwards came to be known by the name of the Pandavas.||

* See Introduction.

† This was also a prevalent custom in that age. We quote Kaustaki Brahmana, II.

“You are the son of a hand-maid. We shall not eat with you.”

‡ Modern Kandahar. It is said that as Dhritarashtra was blind, Gandhari kept her eyes bandaged all through her life. She could not bear the idea that she should have sight whereas her husband should not.

§ She was also called Kunti. She was the sister of Krishna's father. Madri was the princess of Madra.

|| An Aryan clan always took its name from one of the

Dhritarashtra had many sons of whom Durjadhana was the eldest.* But the Kurus did not know for many years together whether Pandu had begotten any sons, or he was alive or dead. Many years after, Kunti returned to Hastinapur, the capital of the Kurus, with five young princes.† She said that the three elder ones were born of her, and the two younger ones, who were twins, were the sons of Madri. As both Pandu and Madri were dead, she thought it proper to come back to the Kuru capital. These princes were

most celebrated of its members. Thus the Kurus took their name from king Kuru, the Yadus from king Yadu, and so on. But some of the Oriental scholars of Europe do not agree with us in saying that a clan was named after the Pandu princes, though we meet with a race called Pandya or Pandras in the history of India. See Max Muller's *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 44; Weber's *History of Indian Literature*, p. 185; *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XV., pp. 95-96.

* It is said Gandhari gave birth to one hundred sons.

† Kunti had a *Kanin* son who became afterwards famous under the name of Karna. It is said that in order to hide her shame, she placed the child in a pot and threw it in the river. The child was found by a charioteer who gave it to his wife named Radha, who brought it up. This child afterwards became the greatest warrior of the Kuru army. The interpolators have related an extraordinary story to save Kunti's honour, which is useless to relate here.

respectively named Judhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva.

The young princes were welcomed by the aged Bishma and king Dhritarashtra as their own children. They were affectionately brought up by Bishma and Vidura, and placed under the tuition of Drona, the great preceptor of that age. Arjuna became the greatest warrior amongst all the princes, but Durjadhana and Bhima became matchless in club-fight.

They thus grew up to the great joy of the people of Hastinapur, to whom Pandu was very much beloved, till at last the Kuru princes with Durjadhana at their head grew extremely jealous of them. Durjadhana tried to harm them in various ways. Attempts were made even on their lives, but the Pandu princes quietly and silently suffered, nay they tried their utmost to court their good will. But all were of no avail; they were finally obliged to leave Hastinapur to save their lives.* When they were thus wander-

* When Durjadhana failed in his attempts to kill the Pandu princes, he induced them to go with their mother to a place called Varanavata where he caused a house of lac to be built. He sent one Purochana with secret instructions to get

ing about in exile, the great event of which we spoke, namely the *Sayamvara* of the Panchala princess, took place. It created a great stir amongst the chiefs and potentates of Northern India.

Draupadi was the only daughter of the great Panchala king, Drupada. She had two brothers, named Dhrishtadumna and Shikhandin,—both of them being great warriors. She was the most beautiful and accomplished princess in the Aryan Land. Young potentates from far and near longed to marry her ; but the king Drupada desired to

the Pandavas to sleep in that house, and when they would be fast asleep, Purochana was to set fire to it. Vidura warned the princes of their danger. Thus instead of Purochana's setting fire to the house, they themselves did it and fled away from the place. It was rumoured that they were all killed.

It must be mentioned here that many of the Kurus doubted the legitimacy of the Pandavas ; for they said, "Pandu is long dead, how could he beget such young children ?" It is related that the five Pandavas were begotten by five celestials, namely Dharma, Vayu, Indra, and the two Aswins, as Karna was by Surja. It is said that Kunti obtained a talisman from Rishi Durvasha by which she could call to her presence any god she liked. Probably these stories were afterwards added to the Mahavarata to gloss over the custom which became hateful in India in later days.

bestow her on the Pandu Prince Arjuna,* for Arjuna was the only prince in India who deserved to possess such a prize as Draupadi. The old Drupada knew that the third Pandava was the greatest warrior in India; he also knew that the sons of Pandu would never be able to live in amity with the sons of Dhritarashtra. If he could win them over, it would be easy for him to wreak his direct vengeance on the Kurus who only a few years ago invaded his kingdom and carried fire and sword throughout his dominions.† But when

* Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter CLXXXVII., Sloka 8, says :—"Jajnasena (Drupada) always cherished the wish to bestow his daughter on Kiriti (Arjuna), the son of Pandu, but did not speak it out to anybody."

† It is related in the Adi Parva, Mahavarata, that the illustrious preceptor of that age, the celebrated Drona, was a great friend of king Drupada. But they finally quarrelled, and Drona came to the hereditary enemies of the Panchalas, namely the Kurus. Drona's brother-in-law, Kripa, was then the preceptor of the Kuru princes. When Drona came to Hastinapur, he was welcomed with all respects, and all the Kuru princes were placed under his charge. A few years after, he marched with the Kurus and invaded Panchala. Drupada was defeated and half of his kingdom was annexed to the Kuru dominions. Drupada then performed a great Sacrifice in order to have a son who would kill Drona. From that Sacrifice arose two sons and one daughter,—the sons

he made all arrangements to hold the *Sayambara* of his daughter, the Pandavas were exiles—wandering from place to place.

were Dhristadumna and Shikhandin, and the daughter was Draupadi.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MARRIAGE OF DRAUPADI

KING Drupada contrived to do something by which he was able to bestow his beautiful daughter on the very person whom he selected for her. It would be better for us to quote the ancient chronicler.*

“The Panchala king caused a very stiff bow to be made,—a bow incapable of being bent by any man except Arjuna. He caused a machinery to be erected in the sky and set up a mark to be shot through that machinery. The king Drupada then proclaimed the *Sayamvara* with these words:—
“He who will string this bow, and he who will be able to shoot the mark above the machinery will obtain my daughter.’ Having heard this, all the

* Henceforth we shall follow the Mahavarata in writing the account of Krishna's life, for there is nothing more of historical value in any of the Puranas. As the original story of the Mahavarata was written by a contemporary chronicler, we shall try to adhere to its descriptions as much as possible, always rejecting those matters that we have referred to in the Introduction.

chiefs and potentates of Aryavarta arrived at the capital of the Panchala king."

"The *Sayamvara* arena was built on an auspicious ground. It was surrounded by palaces and enclosed on all sides by a wall and a moat. It was ornamented with gates and arches, and covered all over with a beautiful canopy. It resounded with the sounds of thousands of trumpets. It was scented with *Aguru* (black aloe), ornamented with garlands and sprinkled with sandal-paste."

"The assemblage of kings and princes daily increased, and the arena looked gay with the performances of the actors and dancers. When this grand assembly had assembled for fifteen days, then on the sixteenth day, Draupadi, having bathed and having been attired in the best robes and adorned with all her ornaments, entered the arena, carrying in her hand a golden dish, on which there were garlands of flowers and other offerings of the *Arghya*."*

"All the musical instruments having been stopped, Dhristadumna came forward taking hold of his sister's arms. He stood in the midst of the

* *Arghya* is a collection of a few things. It was always offered to a man whom one specially wanted to honour.

assembly and spoke thus in a loud voice, 'Hear, O ye assembled princes, this is the bow, that is the mark, and these are the arrows. Shoot the mark through the orifice of the machinery. Truly do I say, he who, possessing noble birth, beauty, and strength, will achieve this great feat shall to-day obtain for his wife my sister Draupadi.'*

The five Pandu princes were present in that great *Sayamvara* assembly. They came there in disguise and were seated amongst the mendicant Brahman† as one of them. They were eager to form an alliance with the powerful Panchala king so that they might get back their just portion in

* Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter 18th.

† In the Vedic age in which Krishna was born, the caste system, as it now exists in India, was not formed. Those that performed the Sacrifices on behalf of the kings and wealthy men were called the Brahmins. They were paid for their labour, and consequently they held rather a lower position than the ruling class. But if any of them were learned, as they often were, he was highly respected by all. But there was no caste distinction; all men had equal rights to study the Vedas, wield the arms, or till the land. Vyasa was the son of a Brahmin, named Parasara, but his mother was a fisherman's daughter, who afterwards became the wife of a king. Drona was a Brahmin, but instead of being a great scholar, he was a great warrior. Our readers will find the whole of the Mahavarata bears out our assertion.

their father's kingdom. They were also desirous to display their prowess in an assembly in which almost all the Aryan princes were present. Leaving their mother in a potter's house, they came to the assembly and sat apart amongst the Brahmans who had come there in hundreds in expectation of receiving alms.

Krishna was also present, but he did not go there to obtain the hands of Draupadi, for he made no attempt to get her. But he was the only man amongst the thousands that were present there who recognised the Pandavas through their disguise. Though he never met his cousins before, yet he easily guessed that the five so-called Brahmans were no other than the five Pandu princes. He scrutinised every man present there, as was his wont, and the Pandavas could not escape his penetrating eye. Turning to his brother Rama, he told him his thoughts, adding, "I have heard the sons of Pandu escaped from the burning lac-house." To which Rama replied, "I am glad to hear that our father's sister Pritha with her heroic sons are alive."

The Kuru princes, Durjadhana and others with their great friend Karna were also present. The

great Jarasandha and Sisupala with all their allies and friends were there. Each and every one of the Kurus was eager to possess the beautiful princess, and if possible thus to wipe out by this alliance their ever-lasting feud with the Panchala king.

“But,” the ancient chronicler adds, “those kings could not even in their imagination string that bow. In exerting with swelling lips to string it, each according to his strength, education, skill and energy, they were all tossed up on the ground. Seeing this, that great bowman Karna went to the place where the bow was. He quickly raised it up, strung it, and placed the arrows on the string. But Draupadi said in a loud voice, ‘I will not choose a Suta (charioteer’s son) for my husband.’ Laughing in vexation, Karna threw aside the bow and came to his seat.”

“When all the kings desisted from the attempt, Arjuna rose from among the Brahmans. The Brahmans cried out, ‘How can a stripling, unpractised in arms and weak in strength, string that bow which the celebrated princes have failed to do? If he fails to achieve success in the act, which he has undertaken by his boyish restless-

ness, the Brahmans will be ridiculous in the eyes of the kings.”*

“Arjuna came to the bow and stood there as steady as a mountain. Walking round the bow in due form, he took it up. He stringed it in the twinkling of an eye, shot the mark, and brought it down on the ground through the orifice. A great uproar arose in the arena ; the Brahmans waved their garments in joy ; the assembled kings and princes uttered exclamations of grief and despair ; the musicians struck up hundreds of drums and trumpets, and the bards and the heralds chanted the praises of the hero. Draupadi slowly walked up to Arjuna with a white robe and a garland of flowers.”

But the disappointed chiefs rose in arms ; they made an attempt to carry away the princess by force, but Arjuna was too strong for any of them. A battle was about to ensue, which would have been fought to the bitterest end had not Krishna risen to be the mediator. He was known by all the princes present there to be far superior to them both in arms and in learning. Therefore

* *Ibid*, Chapter 190th.

when he rose and said "This princess has been justly and in accordance with the Ordinance won by this Brahman," they ceased fighting and peaceably went away to their respective kingdoms.

The Panchala princess Draupadi was finally married in due form to the five Pandu princess*. When the Pandavas had been married, Krishna sent to them various golden ornaments set with pearls and gems. He made them many other presents, of which they were in great need at the time, in order to keep up their position as the princes of Kurujangala.†

* Such marriages were common in the age of which we speak. We quote the Atharva Veda 9-5-27-28.

"The woman that accept a husband when her first husband is alive is never separated from him by giving away *Aja Panchandana*. If the second husband gives away blazing *Aja Panchandana* with *Dakshina*, he and his wife go to the same region." See also the Atharva Veda 5-17-8.

The Pandavas passed their early life in Tibet. It is still a prevalent custom of that country for the women to have a plurality of husbands. This custom is still to be met with among some of the Hindu castes in many parts of India, specially in Orissa.

† This custom disappeared with the Vedic age. It became then absolutely necessary for the writers of the Brahmanical period *i.e.* when Brahmanical supremacy was extreme, to gloss it over. They could not bear the idea that

When they met, Yudhishthira asked Krishna, "O prince, how have you been able to trace us, living as we do in disguise?" Krishna smilingly replied, "O king, fire, even if it is covered, can easily be known. Who else among men except the Pandavas can perform such feats?"*

such was the custom of their forefathers. Thus from Chapters CXCI., to CCI., *Adi Parva, Mahavarata*, had to be interpolated. In these chapters we find that when the Pandavas returned home, they cried from the door, "Mother, we have got splendid alms to-day." The mother replied, "Whatever it be, my sons, divide it among all of you." So that their mother's word might not become false, they married the princess all together. Then Vyasa came and said many extraordinary, ridiculous and foolish things to remove the scruples of all concerned. We need not dwell on these chapters, as only a cursory view of them would show that they are the works of a poetaster.

* *Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter 190th, Slokas 23-24.*

CHAPTER XX

INDRAPRASTHA

THE news of the marriage of the Pandavas with the Panchala princess soon reached Hastinapur. It was a very serious news to the Kuru king. He was fully aware that if he declined to give the Pandavas their father's kingdom, then their hereditary and ever-lasting enemy, king Drupada, would make it a plea to wreak his vengeance upon him. Therefore Dhritarashtra privately consulted with his son Durjadhana and his friends.* We shall quote the ancient chornicler.†

* Karna, Sukani, and Dushasana were the three chief counsellors of Durjadhana. They always supported him in all his acts, both good and evil. Karna, as we have already said, was a *Kanin* son of Kunti, but he was not aware of it. He grew to be a great warrior, and Durjadhana eagerly welcomed him to his court in order to keep a balance of power with the Pandavas, for there was no other man in India who could withstand Arjuna except Karna. Durjadhana made him the king of Anga, but as Karna was always present in the Kuru court, we believe the title was only an honorary one. It is probable Karna never ruled over Anga (modern Western Bengal) which was then but a forest.

Sukani was the prince of Gandhara. He was the brother of Gandhari, and therefore the maternal uncle of Durjadhana. This prince always lived in Hastinapur and was in fact the evil genius of Durjadhana.

Dushasana was one of the brothers of Durjadhana and was a great supporter of all his evil acts. Out of the numerous sons of Dhritarashtra, only Vikarna kept himself aloof from the evil designs of his brothers.

† The speeches that we quote are long in the original, but we give only portions of them. We purposely quote them,

“Durjadhana and Karna came to the king, and they thus spoke to him, ‘O father, you are not acting as you should. You ought to act in such a way as to weaken the power of the Pandavas.’ Dhritarashtra, ever weak and ever fond of his sons, said, ‘O Durjadhana, tell me what is in your mind and in the mind of Karna?’ The wicked Durjadhana then thus addressed his father, ‘Let us by the help of trusted and skilful Brahmans privately create dissensions amongst the Pandavas. A quarrel between the sons of Kunti and Madri is not improbable. Or let the king Drupada with his sons and all his ministers of State be tempted by the offer of vast wealth, so that he may abandon the cause of the Pandavas. Or let our spies speak to each of the Pandavas separately the inconveniences of living in Hastinapur. Let them induce the sons of Pandu to live in Panchala. O father, employ any of these means which appear to you faultless. Time passes away. We should not make any further delay.”

for they would give our readers a fair idea of the various men with whom we shall have to come in contact all through this work. See Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter 103rd to 109th.

Karna said, 'O Durjadhana, in my opinion, your reasonings are not well founded. No machination would succeed against the Pandavas. You have formerly tried to accomplish your desire by various subtle means, but you were not successful in your attempts. In my opinion, this is what is good and advisable for us, namely, to attack and fight with them till they are extirpated.' Having heard what Karna said, the great king Dhritarashtra gave him high praise, and he then thus addressed him, 'You are gifted with great wisdom. You are highly accomplished in arms. Such words, breathing the spirit of heroism, are surely worthy of you. But let Bhishma, Drona, and Vidura and you all consult together. Then adopt that means which will be to our good. He then summoned to him all his ministers and consellers.

In the council the old patriarch, the ever wise Bhishma, thus spoke :—'O Dhritarashtra, I can never consent to a quarrel with the sons of Pandu. Pandu was to me as you are to me. The sons of Gandhari are as dear to me as those of Kunti. Conclude a treaty with those heroes and give them half of the kingdom. O Durjadhana, as you consider this kingdom your paternal property, so do

the Pandavas. Therefore I ask you not to quarrel with them.'

Drona said, 'O King, friends summoned for consultation should always speak what is right and conducive to fame. O Sire, my opinion is the same as that of the illustrious Bhishma. Let the sons of Kunti have a share in the kingdom.'

Karna rose in anger and said, 'O king these two old men are supported by your wealth. They are supposed to be your best friends. What can be more surprising than that they should give you advice that is not for your good?'

The great preceptor, Drona, mildly said, 'O Karna, know what I have said is good for all. This would be for the prosperity of the Kuru race. If you consider it as productive of evil, say what would be to our good.'

Vidura said, 'O king, your friends have spoken to you what would be for our good, but it appears you do not accept it. Knowing that the claim of the Pandavas to the kingdom is even prior to yours, behave virtuously towards them. The stain of calumny is on you on account of the act of Purochana.* Wash yourself off it by kindly behaving

* This refers to the burning of the lac-house.

towards the sons of Pandu. O King, we have not very long ago waged a great war with king Drupada. If we can now secure him as an ally, it will strengthen our power. The Yadus are numerous and powerful. They will all be there where Krishna will be, and where Krishna is, victory is certain. I have not the least doubt that the great Vrisni prince will stand by the Pandavas. O Sire, having heard that the sons of Pritha are alive, the men of the city and the kingdom have become exceedingly glad. They are all eager to see them. Do what will be agreeable to them.'

King Dhritarashtra then said, 'O Vidura, the learned Bhishma and the illustrious Rishi Drona and you yourself have said the truth, and what is good for us. As the heroic sons of Kunti are the sons of Pandu, so are they also my sons. As my sons are entitled to this kingdom, so certainly are the sons of Pandu. Go, Vidura, and in due affection bring the Pandavas here along with their mother. Bring also with them the Panchala princess, Draupadi of celestial beauty.'

Thereupon Vidura at the command of Dhritarashtra went to king Drupada and to the Pandavas. He took with him numerous gems and

jewels and various other riches to be presented to the Panchala king to the Pandavas, and to Draupadi. Having arrived at the Panchala city, he waited upon king Drupada who received him in proper form. They both enquired after each other's health. Vidura then saw the Pandavas and Krishna, embraced them in affection, and enquired after their health. He then presented to the Pandavas, to Kunti, Draupadi, Drupada and Drupada's sons the gems and jewels and various kinds of wealth sent to them by the Kurus, and thus addressed the great Panchala king. 'O Sire, Dhritarashtra with his ministers, sons and friends has again and again enquired after your welfare. He has been highly honoured by an alliance with you. All the Kurus regard themselves greatly blessed by this alliance. This alliance with you has made them happier than if they have acquired a new kingdom. O Sire, now permit the Pandavas to return to Hastinapur. The Kurus are exceedingly eager to see the sons of Pandu. They are long absent from their home, they too must be very eager to see their own city. All the Kuru ladies, all the citizens, all our subjects are eagerly waiting to see the Panchala Princess, Draupadi.'

The Panchala king replied, 'O Vidura, I too have been exceedingly happy by this alliance. It is proper for these illustrious princes to return to their ancestral kingdom. But it is not proper for me to say this myself. If Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, if Rama and Krishna, who are highly learned in the precepts of religion, wish it, then let the Pandavas along with my daughter go back to Hastinapur.'

Yudhisthira said, 'O Sire, I with all my brothers are dependent on you. We shall all gladly do what you will command us.'

As king Drupada looked at Krishna, he said, 'I am of opinion that they should go. But we must all abide by the opinion of king Drupada who is highly learned in the precepts of virtue.'

The Panchala king then said, 'Having considered all the circumstances, I agree with this foremost of men, this heroic and mighty armed Vrishni prince. They should return to their own ancestral kingdom.'

Having been commanded by the illustrious Panchala king, the Pandavas with Draupadi and Kunti started with Vidura for the city of their forefathers. When king Dhritarashtra learnt that

they had arrived, he sent out the Kuru princes and his great ministers to receive them. The city became radiant with sight-seers. Thousands of men, women and children hastened towards the place to see their beloved Pandu princes returned to their city.

The Pandavas then went to the place and worshipped the feet of Dhritarashtra, as also those of Bhishma and also the feet of all else that deserved the honour. They enquired after the health of all, and then entered the palace assigned to them.

When they had taken some rest, they were summoned by the king, who thus addressed them, 'O Yudhishthira, listen with your brothers to what I say. Go to Khandavaprastha,* so that no differences may again arise between you and my children. If you live there, none shall be able to injure you.'

Agreeably to the king's order, the Pandavas started for Khandavaprastha. It was a fearful forest, but they founded a great city there and named it Indraprastha. They received only an

* As Hastinapur stood on the banks of the *Ganges*, so was Khandavaprastha situated on the banks of the *Jamuna*.

extensive dreary land for their kingdom—an wild tract covered with dense forest. But they did not complain; they began to build up there a great kingdom, which soon became the greatest in all India. Having settled them in their new city, Krishna with their permission returned to Dwarka.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MARRIAGE OF SUBHADRA

SOME TIME after, when the Pandavas had comfortably settled down in their new city, Arjuna went to pay a visit to the Vrisni prince Krishna in his own city Dwarka.* We shall again quote our historian :—

When the invincible Arjuna came to the holy and charming Provasa,† Krishna heard of it and

* Chapter, CCXX., to CCXIX., Adi Parva. Mahavarata are interpolations to gloss over the marriage of Draupadi. They relate the arrival of Narada in the Pandava Court. He asked them to make an arrangement amongst themselves so that they might not quarrel over their wife. Under his advice, the Pandavas took a vow that if any of them would approach Draupadi when one of them would be with her, then he would go to exile for twelve years.

One day when Judhisthira was with Draupadi, a Brahmana pitiously appealed to Arjuna to rescue his kine from the robbers. Arjuna faced the dire calamity of exile and entered the room in which Judhisthira was with Draupadi at the time, for in that room he had all his weapons. Having rescued the kine, he returned to his brothers and asked their permission to go away to exile. He left Indraprastha and roved about many places till at last he came to the Provasa.

† This was the most sacred pilgrimage of that age. It was in Guzrat, very near Dwarka.

went to meet his friend. Embracing each other, they enquired after each other's health. They spent some time in the Provāsa and then went to the Raivataka hill. Before their arrival, the hill was, at the command of Krishna, decorated in various ways by many artificers. Various sorts of eatables were also collected for the reception of the Pandu prince. Enjoying everything that was provided for him, Arjuna sat down to witness the performances of actors and dancers. After dismissing them all with proper respect, the Pandava hero then retired for the night.

He rose in the morning, awakened by the sweet songs and melodious notes of the *Vina*,* and by the panegyrics and benedictions of the bards. After he had performed the daily rites, he was accosted with affection by the Vrisni prince. Then ascending a golden chariot, he started with Krishna for Dwarka.

The citizen of the Vrisni city came by hundreds and thousands into the public streets to see him. Dwarka with its gardens, houses and streets, was beautifully decorated to give a grand reception to

* *Vina* is a stringed musical instrument.

the Pandu prince. He was respectfully welcomed by all the Bhojas, the Andhakas, the Vrisnis and the whole Yadu race. He in return worshipped all that deserved his worship and received their blessings. He was accorded a hearty welcome and affectionate reception by all the young men of the Yadu race. He too again and again embraced them all. He then passed many days in the delightful mansion of Krishna.

A few days after his arrival, a great festival was held by the Vrisnis on the Raivataka hill.* In this great festivity in honour of the hill, Arjuna gave away much wealth to the hundreds of Brahmans that assembled there. The Raivataka was in a sea of merriment ; the musicians played in concert on all their musical instruments, the dancers danced, and the songsters sang. The effulgent youths of the Vrisni race, adorned with ornaments, looked handsome everywhere. Intoxicated with drink, adorned with beautiful garlands, attired in costly robes, accompanied by their wives and

* Our readers will find that Krishna introduced his festivity in honour of the hill even amongst his own clansmen. We need not remind our readers that he first held it in the *Vrindavana* in honour of the hill *Govardhana*.

followed by the musicians, they sported about like the celestials in heaven.

When thus walking about, Krishna brought Arjuna to the place where his sister, the beautiful Subhadra, was sporting with her companions. As soon as Arjuna saw her, he was struck with her extraordinary beauty. Having seen that Arjuna was looking at her with marked attention, Krishna smilingly asked, 'How is it that the mind of a man like you is thus agitated by seeing a girl?' Arjuna asked who the maiden was, and Krishna replied, 'She is my sister, Subhadra. She is the most beloved daughter of my father. If your mind is really set upon her, I shall speak to my father.'

Arjuna said, 'She is the daughter of Basudeva and the sister of Krishna, she is matchless in beauty,—whom can she not fascinate? If your sister become my wife, I shall then consider that I have gained all the prosperity of the world. Tell me the means whereby I may obtain her.'

Krishna replied, 'Friend, *Sayamvara* is no doubt the form of marriage prevalent amongst us, but it would be very doubtful in your case, for we do not know her temper and disposition—she

may not chose you. In the case of heroes the forcible taking away of a maiden for the purpose of marriage is also praiseworthy. Therefore if you are eager to marry her, carry her off.' *

Having settled every thing about what should be done, Krishna and Arjuna sent some swift messengers to Judhisthira at Indraprastha. When in due course of time Arjuna got his brother's assent, he decided in consultation with Krishna all that was to be done.

Learning one day that the Vrisni princess had gone to the Raivataka hill, Arjuna set out on Krishna's chariot as if in a hunting excursion. He waited on the way by which Subhadra would return. As soon as he saw her he suddenly rushed towards her and took her upon his chariot. He then drove fast away towards his own city Indraprastha.

In the meanwhile the armed attendants of the princess ran towards Dwarka to give information

* It is quite apparent Krishna was all along eager to marry his sister to Arjuna. But he was aware that his proud kinsmen would not agree to bestow a Vrisni princess on a Pandava, for as we have already said there was a great doubt about the legitimacy of their birth. It is for this reason that he advised Arjuna to carry Subhadra away.

of what had happened. They rushed into the Yadava court and represented to the *Savapala** that the princess Subhadra had been carried away by the Pandu prince. Having heard this, the *Savapala* immediately blew his golden trumpet, calling every one to arms. Alarmed at that sound, the Bhojas, the Vrisnis and the Andhakas poured in from all directions. When they heard what had happened, they all cried, 'Yoke your cars, yoke your cars. We must punish the impudent Kuru.' But Valarama asked them to have patience and addressed them thus, 'O senseless men, what are you doing, when Krishna does say nothing? Let Krishna speak out what he proposes to do.' Then he turned towards his younger brother and thus spoke to him. 'Why do you not speak? Why are you silent? It was for your sake that Arjuna was welcomed and received with all honour by us. It now appears that wretch, that fool does not deserve our welcome and honour. By insulting us all, he has carried away Subhadra by force. He has placed his foot on our head. Never shall I put up with the insult offered by Arjuna.'

* *Savapala* was the chief officer of the court.

Krishna with great calmness said, 'Arjuna has not insulted our family by what he has done. Rather he has enhanced our glory. Arjuna knows that we are not mercenary and we shall not give away Subhadra to him by receiving wealth. He regarded the *Sayamvara* doubtful in its consequences, for Subhadra might make some other choice. He is not a man that would accept a bride as a gift, as if she were a cattle. He knew that there was none who would sell to him his own daughter. Under the circumstances Arjuna had no other alternative than to carry away the maiden. He has done it according to custom and ordinance.* This alliance is a very proper one. Arjuna is the fittest husband for Subhadra. He comes of the illustrious Bharata race ; he is also our cousin, the son of our father's sister, he is the greatest warrior of our age. Who could be a better match for our sister than Arjuna ? I would, therefore, ask you to go to him and stop him by conciliation. If we go to fight with

* We have already said in our footnote, page 97, that the carrying away of a maiden was thought by the Aryans to be the best way of marrying a bride. Krishna pointed out his reasons for not disapproving the conduct of Arjuna.

him and if we are defeated, our fame will be destroyed for ever. There is no disgrace, however, in reconciliation.'

Having heard these words of Krishna, the Yadus thought that he was right. They then all went and stopped him. Then bringing him back in great honour, they bestowed their beloved princess Subhadra on him with great pomp and grandeur.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GREAT ASSEMBLY HALL

AFTER the marriage of Subhadra, the people of Dwarka, with Rama and Krishna at their head, according to custom started for Indraprastha to pay a complimentary visit to the Pandavas. When they all were at Indraprastha, the Pandu princes desired to clear a larger tract of land than what they possessed by burning down the great Khandava forest.* The order was issued, thousands of men

* After the marriage of Subhadra follow Chapters CCXXIII to CCXXVI., these are the last chapters of the Adi Parva, Mahavarata. They are called the *Khandavadaha Parva*, or the burning of the *Khandava* forest. There is hardly anything of historical value in these chapters. They are obvious after-interpolations, added by later poets who based their descriptions on the burning of the *Khandava* by the Pandavas. Perhaps it was this fact only that was mentioned by Vyasa in the original Mahavarata. At the age of which we speak, the Aryans settled in India by burning down the forests with which the whole country was covered. A few chapters higher up we find that the Pandavas obtained only a fearful forest to found their city upon. It was quite natural, therefore, that they would burn down this forest to clear the tract. Perhaps the great Vyasa wrote this much, but the later poets added that one day when Krishna and Arjuna

were collected, and every arrangement was made. When everything necessary was done, Krishna and Arjuna with all the people set out from their city, and on reaching the forest, they set fire to it. Soon did the all-destroying element fearfully rage and foam and roar, consuming everything that came in its way. It was an awful sight. Thousands of birds flew up and dropped down into the raging fire with their wings and feathers burnt down. Innumerable wild beasts piteously screamed and roared, and ran in all directions, but none of them was able to get out of the reach of the fearful fire that enveloped them like a fiery demon, licking his tongue to taste their blood. A Danava,* named Moy, who used to live in this forest was at the

were sitting on the banks of the *Jamuna*, the fire-god, Agni, came to them in the disguise of a Brahman and he asked them to give him some food. When asked what food he desired to have, he then introduced himself as the fire-god and told the two heroes that he wanted to consume the *Khandava* forest, for he had got dyspepsia by eating too much of sacrificial *ghee* and the consumption of the *Khandava* was its only remedy. Krishna and Arjuna promised to help him in the matter and thus the *Khandava* forest came to be burnt down. These descriptions are too palpable fictions to be taken into serious consideration.

* The original inhabitants of India. See our note in p. 6.

point of being burnt down ; but Arjuna hastened to his rescue and saved his life. When the forest was completely burned down, Moy came to Arjuna and thus addressed him, "O son of Kunti, I have been saved by you from this angry fire-god, who desired to consume me. Tell me what I shall do for you."*

Arjuna replied, "O great Danava, you have done everything. You have nothing more to do. Go wherever you like. Be always well-disposed towards us as we are always well-disposed towards you."

Moy said, "O lord, what you have said is fully worthy of you. But, O descendant of Bharata, I gladly desire to do something for you. I am a great artist,—in fact I am the Viswakarma† of the Danavas. O son of Pandu, allow me to do something for you."

* See Sava Parva, Mahavarata. Chapter I. The major portion of the Sava Parva is evidently a portion of the original Mahavarata. As the story of Moy Danava is found in it, we accept it as a fact. Another ground for our accepting it is that the Great Assembly Hall that Moy built was the axle on which the whole story of the Mahavarata rolled.

† Viswakarma literally means the maker of the universe. But here it refers to the Engineer-in-chief of the Danavas.

Arjuna said, "O Danava, you consider that your life has been saved by me. Such being the case, I cannot make you do anything for me. But I am not willing to disappoint you. Do something for Krishna. That will be sufficient requital for my services to you."

Moy turned towards Krishna and pressed him to say what he could do for him ; but Krishna did not ask any thing to be done for him. He said, "O best of artists, if you desire to do some service to me, then build a large Assembly Hall for king Judhisthira. Build such an Assembly Hall that mortal men may not be able to build another like it."

Then Krishna and Arjuna, having told every thing to Judhisthira, introduced Moy to him. The king received him with all honours, and Moy too accepted them with due respect and humility.

Then at the request of Krishna, Moy in course of time built a magnificent and wonderful Assembly Hall for the Pandavas. The people gazed at it in wonder and astonishment, but none of them ever dreamed what would be the outcome of its construction in their city. It never crossed their mind why out of thousands of things Krishna

asked the Danava to build an Assembly Hall for the Pandu princes.

This beautiful and matchless *Sava** at no distant date produced two very important but contrary results. It led king Yudhisthira to perform the great *Rajsuya* Sacrifice in which he assumed the Imperial Dignity. His magnificence, power and wealth filled the minds of his cousins, the Kurus,—Durjadhana and others,—with great jealousy. They challenged him to a game of dice, and winning from him all that he possessed, made him take a vow to go to exile for thirteen years. These dissensions and fraternal quarrels finally ended in the great battle of Kurukshetra in which almost all the chiefs and potentates of India, nay half the people of the Aryan race, lost their lives.

But in this sanguinary field of battle where millions of men fell fighting, where blood streamed forth and where death danced like a fierce demon, Krishna preached his Great Religion. On this fearful field he preached to the human race the Words of

* *Sava* is an Assembly Hall. Here it means the hall where the king held his court and performed all his public and royal functions.

God. In the midst of the dead and the dying, he raised his finger and pointed to mankind the way to the land of ever-lasting bliss. In the holy field of Kurukshetra did he establish in the world the *Kingdom of Righteousness*—not in mere words, but in living reality.

CHAPTER XXIII

PROPOSAL FOR RAJSUYA

THE kingdom of Indraprastha became more prosperous and more powerful than the old kingdom of Hastinapur.* With the prowess of arms of his four heroic brothers, Yudhisthira became a very great king. Many chiefs and potentates acknowledged his supremacy, and his treasury was filled with immense wealth.† His relatives, friends and ministers urged him to assume the Imperial Dignity by performing the great Rajsuya Sacrifice. The grand Assembly Hall was ready, his power was immense,—why should he not become the king of all the kings of Northern India ?‡

* After the burning of the forest and the building of the Assembly Hall, there follow eight chapters in the Sava Parva, Mahavarata. They contain a lecture by Narada to Yudhisthira. There is no mention of Krishna in any of these chapters.

† See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapters XXV to XXXII., the conquests of the Pandavas.

‡ From Chapter XIII to Chapter XIX is the Rajsuya Sambhava Parva in which the proposal of the Rajsuya Sacrifice has been discussed. We have already quoted two extracts from these chapters. (Chapter XVI., Krishna's

Though tempted to perform this great Sacrifice, Judhisthira hesitated ; he was not a man to do things in haste. He knew that there was only one man amongst his friends and relatives who would speak out the truth, however unpleasant it might be. He knew he would not speak things only to please

speech in 91 and 92 pages). We have quoted in this chapter many more passages, that appeared to us to be the part of the original Mahavarata. Interpolations are very prominent in the Sava Parva of the Mahavarata,—more palpable and easier to be detected than in any other Parva of the Mahavarata. Repetitions are also too many, and contradictory statements are often met with. We need not say we have rejected all palpable fictions and obvious interpolations.

In Chapters XVII and XVIII, an extraordinary description of the birth of Jarasandha is given ;—we might call it the work of a fourth rate story-teller. It cannot be the writing of the great Vyasa. We quote a passage, Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XVII., Slokas 32—41 :—

“O best of the Bharata race, recalling his former promise, that best of kings (Brihadratha) gave that one fruit (which he received from an ascetic) to his two wives. His two beautiful wives ate the mango, dividing it into two equal parts. In consequence of the infallibility of the Rishi's word, both of them conceived. Seeing them in that state, the king was filled with great joy. Some time after, when the proper season came, each of the two queens brought forth two fragmentary bodies. Each of these bodies had one eye, one arm, one leg, half a stomach, and half a face. Seeing the fragmentary bodies, they began to tremble. The helpless sisters then in great anxiety consulted together. They then

him as his friends, relatives and ministers often did. He therefore thought of Krishna, and sent a swift messenger to Dwarka to invite the great Vrisni prince to Indraprastha. Krishna was the great Mentor of all the chiefs and potentates of India.

In due time Krishna arrived at the Pandava city. Then in full court king Yudhisthira thus spoke to him,* "O Krishna, I have desired to perform the great Rajsuya Sacrifice. But it cannot be performed through my simply wishing to do it. You know what is necessary to accomplish it. My friends and ministers have said that I should perform it; but your words will be my guide in this matter. Some, without noting the difficulties, offer advices merely out of friendship. Some out

abandoned in sorrow the fragments which had life in them. The two midwives then carefully wrapped up those still-born fragments and went out of the inner apartments by the back door. Throwing away the bodies, they returned in haste. O best of men, some time after a Rakshasha woman, named Jara, who lived on flesh and blood, took up the fragments that lay on the crossing of the road. Being impelled by fate that Rakshasha woman united the fragments to make them easier to carry. O best of men, as soon as the fragments were united, they formed into a heroic child of one body."

* Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XIII., Slokas 46-51.

of self-interest say what will be agreeable to the listener. Some consider what is beneficial to themselves is the only fittest thing to be done. But you are above all motives. You have conquered anger and desire. You should tell me what is beneficial both to me and to the world."

The unpleasant truth that his friends, relatives, and ministers did not speak to him, Krishna told him in plain words. He told him that though he was no doubt the fittest person to assume the Imperial Dignity, yet he would not be allowed to do it,—not at least without a great struggle,—by Jarasandha who was then holding it in *Aryavarta*. He said,* "O best of the Bharata race, surely are you worthy of becoming an Emperor. But, in my opinion, you will not be able to perform the Rajsuya Sacrifice, so long as the highly powerful Jarasandha remains alive. He has kept many kings imprisoned in his city, Girivraja.† By defeat-

* Ibid, Chapter XIV., Slokas 61—70.

† The city of Girivraja was situated in Modern Behar. The famous old city of Rajgriha was the ancient city Girivraja. The ruins of this ever-renowned city are still to be seen a few miles from the modern town of Behar, one of the subdivisional head quarters of the Patna district. The city was enclosed by five hills which still hold up their heads as they did at the

ing the kings, he has become the master over all the sovereigns. From his fear we have left Mathura and fled to the distant Dwarka. Therefore I say, O great king, if you desire to perform the Rajsuya, try to release the kings and kill the great tyrant. Unless you do this, your proposal can never be successful, for he will oppose you, he will destroy your Sacrifice, — nay, he will destroy yourself and your kingdom. On the other hand if you can kill him, you will destroy the greatest tyrant of the world. You will save innumerable kings from life-long misery, and earn everlasting renown. To kill an oppressor of humanity like Jarasandha would be of the greatest benefit to the world. One, who aspires to be the greatest of all kings, should have the greatest good of the world as his life's work."

"We are all alarmed," said Judhisthira, "at the prowess and wickedness of the king of Magadha. When you are afraid of Jarasandha's might, how

time of Jarasandha, and again many hundred years after at the time of Goutama Buddha. In the Mahavarata, these five hills are respectively called, *Vaihara*, *Varaba*, *Vrishava*, *Rishigiri* and *Chaitaka*.

can I consider myself strong enough to fight with him ?”

A council of war was then held. Bhima was for immediate fight,—Arjuna was not at all afraid of the wicked king,—Nakula and Sahadeva longed to have a trial of strength with the great Magadha potentate,—the generals and warriors of the Pandava army all expressed their eagerness to march against the Magadha kingdom and crush its cruel king. But Krishna mildly said, “Men of immature understanding begin an act without having an eye to what may happen in future.”* Then he turned towards the king and said, “O Sire with the army that you command, if you meet Jarasandha on an open field of battle, it would not be possible for you to defeat him. His stupendous army will crush yours as a lion does a lamb. It would be mere needless and wanton bloodshed of innumerable men,—innocent and poor,—who should not be butchered either for the guilt of Jarasandha or for the fulfilment of your desire. It would be one of the greatest sinful acts. One should not commit sin even to bring about good.

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XV.

Therefore, O great king, I ask your permission to take with me Bhima and Arjuna and go to meet the Magadha king. We shall challenge him to a single combat ; and as a warrior he will never be able to refuse us. I can assure you, Sire, with whomsoever amongst us three, he elects to fight, he is sure to be killed by him. We shall thus kill him in a fair fight without bringing about a sanguinary war and filling the earth with blood."

"O Krishna," replied the king, "out of my selfish motive and out of desire for the Imperial Dignity, how can I send you to Jarasandha ? I consider Bhima and Arjuna as my two eyes and you as my mind. How shall I be able to live without my mind and eyes?"

Arjuna, Bhima and Krishna asked him not to entertain any fear for their safety. They would be sure to kill the Magadha king and return in safety to Indraprastha. They dispelled his fears and anxieties and secured his consent. They then started for the kingdom of Magadha.*

* The bare facts that we have narrated in this small chapter have been picked up from eight long chapters *i. e.* from Chapters XII to XX of the Sava Parva of the Mahavarata. We have already said that a careful study of the

But before they could reach the city of Girivraja they thought it proper to avoid all public notice. It was impossible for such three men to travel across India without creating a great commotion all over the country. They, therefore, assumed the guise of *Snataka** Brahmanas and started on foot as mendicants travelling over the country.†

Sava Parva would convince any one that it contains much of the original Mahavarata. The reason is that interpolations are more apparent and easier to be detected in this Parva than in any other of the Mahavarata. A little careful study would show that the original and later writings are too distinct to be altogether imperceptible. We shall point them out as we proceed.

* *Snataka* Brahman is one who has taken up *Snataka* (ascetic) vows

† In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 70—73, the death of Jarasandha is described. Vishnu Purana and Harivansa say nothing of this affair.

CHAPTER XXIV

ARRIVAL AT GIRIVRAJA

TRAVELLING through many countries, the three princes at last arrived at the great city of the Magadha king.* According to custom and ordinance,† they did not enter the city through its

* We are studiously trying to adhere as much as possible to the original descriptions of the Mahavarata, for we have already said that we believe that much of the Sava Parva of the present Mahavarata is the original story written by the great Vyasa. We have, however, rejected many passages as being interpolations and repetitions. Our readers will find that though we have rejected them and did not add any thing, yet the continuity of the narrative or of the description is in no way disturbed. Perhaps this is a sufficient proof that the passages that we have rejected are interpolations and after-additions.

† There were in ancient India some unwritten laws as regards social and military etiquette, manners and customs, morals and ethics. The ancient Aryans strictly followed and respected them. They considered their violation as being the greatest sin. These ordinances were many, and some of them our readers will find in this chapter, such as (1) Not to enter the house or the city of an enemy by the public gate. (2) Not to accept the worship of one who is an enemy. (3) Not to

public gates. They scaled one of the hills* that surrounded the city, and then forcing a passage through it, they descended in the streets of Girivraja.

They then went straight on to the palace,† and sent intimation to the king that they asked for an interview. The permission was granted, and they were sent for. When they appeared before the great king, they were asked to take their seats and to accept the worship that was offered to a guest,

fight with one who has grown fatigued. (4) To refuse a challenge to a single combat &c, &c. We would ask our readers to mark these ancient Aryan "morals" and compare them with those of the modern world. Our readers will come across many of these ancient Aryan ordinances in this little book.

* This hill was named the Chaitaka.

† Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Sloka 26. says :—"Seeing the great wealth of these shops, those best of men, Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna, proceeded along the public streets. Those greatly powerful heroes snatched garlands from the flower-vendors." Can we believe that men like Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna will forcibly snatch away flowers from the flower-vendors? This "snatching and asking for flowers" is also mentioned in the Vishnu Purana. Chapter XX., Part V., where it describes the entry of Krishna and Rama into Mathura. Perhaps it was a mere custom for the heroes of ancient India to ask and to accept flowers from their vendors. Flowers are still offered to the heroes all over the world.

but they declined both with thanks.* The strange attire and the heroic mien of the visitors struck the king. He looked at them long, and then said,† “It is well-known to me that nowhere in the whole world the Brahmans engaged in observing the *Snataka* vows ever adorn themselves with garlands or with fragrant paste. Who are you then, thus adorned with flowers,—and with hands that bear the marks of the bow-strings? Your costume gives me to understand that you are Brahmans, though you bear all the marks of the warriors? Tell me truly who you are. Breaking down the peak of the *Chailaka* hill, why have you in disguise entered the city by other ways than through the public gates?”

* In the Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Slokas 31-34, it is mentioned that when Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna met Jarasandha, the latter two kept silent, and Krishna said that they had taken the vow of silence till mid-night. Having heard this Jarasandha retired and met them at mid-night. We have rejected this description as being interpolation. The style of the couplets shows that it is not the part of the original Mahavarata. Besides, this incident is purposeless. There was no reason why Bhima and Arjuna should remain silent till mid-night, for we find later on that the combat was fought publicly before all the people of Girivraja. The challenge was also made as publicly.

† See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXI, Sloka 42-43.

"O king," replied Krishna, "all men are competent to observe the *Snataka* vows ;—and as persons who adorn themselves with flowers always gain prosperity, we have adorned ourselves with garlands. The wise men enter their enemy's house through a way which is not the public gate. Only in the house of a friend they enter by the proper gate. We have, therefore, done the same. Know also, O king, that entering an enemy's house with the purpose of accomplishing an object, we do not accept the worship offered by him." "I do not recollect," said Jarasandha, "that I have ever done you any injury. When I have done you no harm, why do you consider me as your enemy ? I strictly adhere to the practices of my order. I never injure any of my subjects. In bringing this charge against me, you appear to be mistaken."

"Many kings," replied Krishna, "have been made captive by you. After persecuting them, you intend to offer them as sacrifices. You have turned men of your own order into beasts. Having done this cruel wrong to the entire royal race, how do you consider yourself innocent ? We practise virtue, and we are capable of protecting virtue ; therefore if we do not punish you, your sin will

touch us.* We are always desirous of helping the distressed; we have therefore come to kill you. Know that we are not Brahmans,—I am Krishna,

* We should ask our readers to mark the above words of Srikrishna. Krishna says that one who is virtuous and at the same time capable of protecting virtue, *i.e.* preventing others from committing sin, is bound to protect virtue and prevent sin being committed. If he fails in doing it, he is as much a sinner as the one who commits sin. In his opinion a man should not only be virtuous and perform all virtuous acts, but he should also prevent others from committing sin. In Udyoga Parva, Chapter LXXII, Sloka 18, Mahavarata, we find the following passage. "The sin that is committed by killing one who does not deserve to be killed is as great as the sin of not killing one who deserves to be killed :"
i.e. one who does not deserve to be killed should *by no means* be killed, but one who deserves to be killed should *by all means* be killed. Krishna told Jarasandha in plain words, "You are a great sinner, and as we are capable of preventing you from committing sin, we have considered it our duty to make an attempt to stop you in your sinful career. You are beyond all reform,—no amount of persuasion would bring about a change for the better in you,—therefore you deserve to be killed; that is the only means of preventing you from committing sin. We have therefore come to kill you." Buddha, Christ and other great prophets also tried to prevent the commission of sin in the world by preaching,—but Krishna went a step further. He not only reformed the sinners by preaching, but where he found a sinner beyond all reform, he removed him from the world. To eradicate sin in the world he was as much an evangelist spreading his great teachings broadcast as a judge-passing sentence where it was necessary.

the Vrisni prince ;—these two are the Pandu princes, Bhima and Arjuna. We challenge you to a single combat. Either liberate the kings or go to the abode of Yama (god of death).”

Jarasandha smiled and said, “I never make a king prisoner without defeating him. O Krishna, neither am I the person to liberate my prisoners through fear or by threats. I am ready to fight with troops against troops, or alone against you one, two or three, separately or all together.” “O king,” said Krishna, “then tell us with whom amongst us three you intend to fight ?”

The great king of Magadha cast scornful glances at Krishna and Arjuna whom he considered to be too insignificant to be accepted by him as his adversaries. He turned like an infuriated bull towards Bhima and said, “O Prince, I shall fight with you. It is always better to be vanquished by a superior than by an inferior one.”*

* We have said that none should accept the entire Sava Parva (as we now possess) as being written by Vyasa. If we do it, we shall then have to take the following as an actual fact. In Sava Parva, Chapter XIX., Slokas 22-24 say :— “Some time after when king Kansa was killed by Krishna, an enmity arose between him (Jarasandha) and Krishna. The greatly powerful king of Magadha whirled a club ninety-nine

CHAPTER XXV

THE DEATH OF JARASANDHA

JARASANDHA ordered his son Sahadeba* to be installed on the throne and made all preparations for the great combat. We shall once more quote the ancient chronicler;—

“The priests brought the yellow pigment obtained from the cow, also garlands of flowers and other auspicious articles and various excellent medicines for restoring unconsciousness and for alleviating pains. The propitiatory ceremonies for the king

times and hurled it towards Mathura. That excellent club fell at a distance of ninety-nine *Yojanas*.” It would be fair to mention that the above is taken from the long and ridiculous description of the birth of Jarasandha, which we have already mentioned in our note in page 149.

* This incident shows that Jarasandha was well aware that his end had come. It also shows how strong were some of the unwritten laws of the ancient Aryans. Even a man like Jarasandha did not dare to refuse the challenge or to do anything to destroy his enemies, though he found them alone, unarmed, and unprotected in his own impregnable fort. Jarasandha was sinful, but he was above meanness.

with benedictions were then performed by an illustrious Brahman. Removing his crown and properly binding his hair, Jarasandha stood up like an ocean bursting through its shore. He then rushed at Bhima like the Asura Vala at Indra.* Those two great heroes, Jarasandha and Bhima, with their bare arms as their only weapons, then cheerfully engaged in the fight. Seizing each other's arms and twining each other's legs, they slapped their arm-pits."†

It was a wonderful combat; and all the people of Girivraja viewed it with wonder and astonish-

* This refers to the well-known story of the Puranas, the war between the Devas and the Danavas for the possession of heaven. We need not say Indra was the king of the Devas, *i. e.* the celestials. Many Danava chiefs now and then attacked the plains of heaven and fought with the celestials. Vala was one of them.

† The description of the wrestling between Bhima and Jarasandha as given in the Mahavarata is long. It covers ten slokas from 10 to 20, Chapter XXIII. Sava Parva, Mahavarata. It shows that wrestling was an art in ancient India. There were various feats of wrestling known to the renowned heroes of that age. In this description of the wrestling we find the names of a few of them, such as *Pristavanga*, *Samparva*, *Nemcha*, *Purnakumea*, *Trinupira*, *Purnadyaga*, &c. We are sorry we cannot quote here the long description of these wrestling feats.

ment.* They fought on day after day; none could defeat the other,—both were of herculean strength. On the evening of the fourteenth day, the great Magadha king grew fatigued,—he stopped to take breath; but Bhima fought on and pressed him hard. Having seen this, Krishna thus spoke to Bhima.† “O son of Kunti, the foe that has become tired and fatigued in the fight should not be pressed. Therefore, O prince, you should not now oppress this king.” But Bhima did not give much heed to the words of the Vrisni prince. He said, “O Krishna, this wretch is still before me with girded loins and of sufficient strength. He should not be excused by me.”‡ Having said this, Bhima raised up the strong, but

* Slokas 21 to 22, Chapter XXIII., Sava Parva, Mahavarata say :— ‘Thousands of citizens, consisting of Brahmans, Khashtriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, and also women and even old men, came out and assembled there to witness the fight. The crowd became so great that it grew to be a solid mass of human beings having no space between two persons.’

† Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXIII., Slokas 32-33.

‡ The morals of Bhima could not be so high as those of Krishna, but he had still to defend his action by saying that Jarasandha was not at all fatigued,—so strong was the moral sense of the people of that age.

now much fatigued Jarasandha and whirled him on high. He then pressed his knees against his backbone and broke his body into two. The people of Magadha were struck dumb by fear; loud lamentations rose everywhere; but the great king had fallen in a fair fight and there was no alternative left to the people but to submit to the inevitable.*

The imprisoned kings were then all liberated; and with them Krishna and the Pandu princes came to a plain outside the city and encamped. They all expressed their heart-felt gratitude to the Vrisni prince; and they thus spoke to him, "O mighty-armed hero, such virtuous acts are no wonder in you. We were all languishing in the fearful hill-fort of the cruel Jarasandha. To our good fortune you have rescued us and thus earned ever-lasting renown. We all bow to you. Command us what we shall do." Krishna smilingly replied, "King Judhishtira is desirous of performing the Rajsuya Sacrifice. That virtuous king is

* This incident also shows the respect with which all the people followed the well-known rules of morals. Our readers will find all through this book that the morals of ancient India were very high.

willing to assume the Imperial Dignity. Help him in his attempt." They all cheerfully promised to do what Krishna said. They then made him various presents and went away to their respective kingdoms.

Bhima, Arjuna and Krishna, then having received large presents from Sahadeva, the newly installed king of Magadha, started back towards Indraprastha.*

They had a triumphal progress through Northern India for they were now the victors of the greatest king of the Aryan race, nay the destroyers of the greatest tyrant of the age. Thus marching on in the greatest pomp and grandeur they reached in due time the magnificent city of

* There was apparent interpolations throughout the two chapters from which we have culled a few facts that we have put in this chapter. In chapter XXIV, Slokas 22-23 Krishna thought of Gadura, the celestial bird, on whom Vishnu rides. There was no need whatsoever for Krishna's thus thinking of Gadura, but he did it. Here ends the matter, —there is no further mention of the bird. In this chapter also we find that Jarasandha possessed a *celestial* car. There are many more such things all through these chapters. They are evidently after-interpolations. We have dropped all these descriptions, and we believe the continuity of the description is in no way disturbed.

the Pandavas and paid their respects to its pious king.

“O king,” said Krishna, “the mighty Jarasandha has been killed by Bhima. All the kings, kept imprisoned at Girivraja, have been liberated. You are worthy of the Imperial Dignity in every respect. Let, therefore, the great Rajsuya Sacrifice be now performed.”

King Judisthira embraced him in joy.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FIRST WORSHIP

NOW arrangements were being made on all sides for the great Sacrifice.* King Judhisthira thus spoke to his brothers and ministers :—" Let men be appointed to collect without loss of time all those articles that the Brahmans will direct as necessary for the performance of this Sacrifice and also all auspicious necessities and things that Dhaumya† may order to be collected."‡

* From Chapter XXV to Chapter XXX., Sava Parva, Mahavarata, is the *Digvijaya Parva*. i.e., the descriptions of the conquests of the various countries made by the four younger Pandavas. There is no doubt that conquests were first made, and the proposal for the Rajsuya Sacrifice was then made. This chapter is culled from Chapters XXXIII to XXXIV., Sava Parva Mahavarata.

† Dhaumya was the family priest of the Pandavas

‡ The Sacrifices of the ancient Aryans required many articles for the performances of their ceremonies. It would not be interesting to give a list of things required in the performance of a Sacrifice like Rajsuya. See *Srauta Sutra*, *Satapata Brahmana* &c.

In due course of time all arrangements were made. The great Assembly Hall,* built by Moy, was the place where this magnificent ceremony was to be solemnised. Around it were constructed innumerable mansions in which the royal guests were lodged. Men from all quarters of the earth were invited and welcomed with all the honors due to their respective positions. Musicians played, bards sang—dancers danced; it was the most magnificent affair ever seen in India.

Each and every one of the chiefs and potentates of *Aryavarta* had come with their armies and retinues,—and each had been lodged in a magnificent palace. The ancient chronicler goes on to say: —“These houses were full of various kinds of eatables. They were adorned with tanks and trees. They were delightful, and furnished with every

* See pages 145—146. Here is what happened even to Durjodhana in this magnificent hall. Sava Parva, Mahavarata, Chapter XLVII, Slokas 3—6 say: “One day the son of Dhritarashtra, Durjodhana, came to a place (in this hall) made of crystal. Mistaking it for water, he drew up his clothes. Finding out his mistake, he wandered over the hall. Some time after, he mistook a lake of crystal water adorned with water-flowers for land, and fell into it with all his clothes on.”

kind of furniture. They were enclosed on all sides with well-built, high and white-washed walls. Their windows were covered with net-works of gold: their interior was adorned with strings of pearls; their floors were covered with costly carpets; and they were all adorned with garlands of flowers and perfumed with excellent aloes."*

The various duties and functions of the great Sacrifice were then assigned by the Pandava king to various princes and chiefs. Dushasana† was charged to superintendent to commissariat arrange-

* Here is the account of this great function given by Durjodhana to his father. "Judhisthira supports eighty-eight thousand *Snataka* Brahmans, who lead householder's life, by giving each thirty maid-servants. Ten thousand other Brahmans daily eat richly cooked food from golden plates. The king of Kambhoja sent to him hundreds and thousands of black, darkish and red skins of the deer called *Kadali* and also blankets of excellent texture. Hundreds and thousands of female elephants, horses and cows, and also thirty thousand female camels are seen within his palace. The invited kings brought them as their tributes. I never heard or saw such enormous wealth as was brought to the Sacrifice of the son of Pandu. When no less than a *lac* of Brahmans were fed, it was arranged to notify the fact by blowing conchs in choruses. I continually heard such choruses. On every occasion it indicated that one *lac* of Brahmans had been fed."

† Dushasana was a brother of Durjodhana.

ments. Ashwathama* was requested to look after the Brahmans. Sanjaya† was appointed to welcome all the assembled kings. Kripa‡ was asked to take charge of the diamond, gold, pearls and gems, and to distribute them among the Brahmans and others. Vidura§ became the master of exchequer. Durjodhana became the receiver of tributes brought by the kings. Krishna, the central figure, was charged to protect and guard the Sacrifice.|| Thus various works were assigned to the various chiefs, and the great ceremony began.¶

* Ashwathama was the son of Drona.

† Sanjaya was the favourite companion and minister of the old blind king Dhritarashtra.

‡ Kripa was the tutor of the Kuru princes.

§ Vidura was a brother of Dhritarashtra. See p. 111.

|| Sloka 39, Chapter XLV, Sava Parva, Mahavarata, says;— "So long the great Sacrifice was not completed, the mighty armed Krishna guarded it with his bow *Saranga*." But Sloka 10, Chapter XXXV says:—"Krishna, the centre of all men, with the desire of gaining the excellent fruits, willingly took upon himself the task of washing the feet of the Brahmans."

¶ Sacrifices such as Rajsuya, Aswamedha &c. were all long ceremonies with various complicated rituals. It would be tedious reading if we describe them here. See *Satapata Brahmana* &c.

When the preliminary ceremonies were performed, then in that magnificent assembly of all that was best in India,—in that great congregation of wealth, heroism, and knowledge,—in that meeting of India's greatest chiefs and potentates, heroes and warriors, sages and Rishis, the Patriarch of the Kuru race, the great Bhishma, rose and said, “(O Judhisthira, now offer *Arghas** to the assembled guests as each deserves. The preceptors, the sacrificial priests, the relatives, the *Snatakas*, the friends and the kings,—these are the six classes of persons who deserve to receive *Arghas*. Bring *Arghas* for each of them, and let the *Argha* be presented first to him who is the foremost of all of them.”

“(O grandsire,” said Judhisthira, “whom amongst my guests do you consider to be the foremost ? To whom shall the *Argha* be presented first ?”

* In ancient India the offering of *Arghas* was one of the most prevalent customs. When a man wanted to honour another, he did it by offering him the *Argha*. In all ceremonies, such as marriages &c., *i.e.*, in which a large number of people were invited, the host honoured his guests by presenting them. *Arghas* according to their order of precedence. *Argha* was made of a few things, such as sandal-paste, blades of grass, flowers &c. &c.

A low murmur rose all over that great assembly. People talked to their neighbours in a subdued tone,—each looked towards the other, and all became excessively eager to know what Bhishma would say. It was the assembly of the best and the foremost men of India,—the best and foremost both in arms and knowledge, virtue and learning,—it was an assembly in which a king was assuming the Imperial Dignity, thereby becoming the first of the foremost men of his age, but who was the foremost of all?

Bhishma rose, and a solemn silence fell over all. Every one was on the tiptoe of eagerness,—even the drop of a needle would have been heard in that assembly of thousands of men. Bhishma rose,—and in a voice as that of a trumpet said, “As the sun shines among all luminous objects, so shines Krishna among all men present here. Therefore, (O Judhithira, the *Argha* should be first presented to him.”

Cheers after cheers rose from the various parts of the assembly, but a dissentient voice was not wanting. As thousands and thousands of men assembled loudly approved the words of Bhishma by their cheers, there were hundreds of others

who disapproved them as uproariously. It was evident to all that a great crisis had arisen.*

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXXVI.

CHAPTER XXVII

SHISHUPALA'S ATTACK ON KRISHNA

THE mighty king of Chedi, the late generalissimo of the great Jarasandha, Shishupala, Krishna's own cousin,* took the lead of opposition. He rose in anger; fire flashed from his eyes, and his hair stood on an end. In a voice as that of a roaring tiger, which at once hushed the assembled multitude, he thus addressed the old Patriarch of the Kuru race;—"When so many illustrious kings are present here, this man of the Vrisni race by no means deserves to have a royal worship. Your present conduct in wilfully making this man worshipped by the Pandavas is not worthy of the illustrious Kurus."†

* Shishupala was the son of Srutashrava, the third sister of Basudeva, Krishna's father. Krishna and Shishupala were of the same age, but Shishupala was very jealous of his cousin, and was ever on the alert to do him injury. In fact he considered him a great rival.

† All through chapters 37th to 45th, Sava Parva, Mahavarata, Shishupala's various abusive speeches are given. We have thought fit to quote only a few passages.

He then turned towards the five Pandavas and roared, "O sons of Pandu, you are children. You do not know what *Dharma** is. This Bhishma has but little knowledge, and therefore he has transgressed all the rules of Morality. How does this man, who is not a king,† deserve to be worshipped among these kings present here? O Yudhisthira, if you consider him to be the eldest, lo! here is Basudeva. How can his son be worshipped before him? If you consider him your well-wisher and supporter, why, when Drupada is here,—how can he get the first worship? If you consider him your preceptor, then, Drona is present here. If you consider him the greatest of all Veda-knowing men, what! the great Dwaipayana Vyasa is here. Well, old Bhishma whom you all revere, the great hero Ashwathama who is learned in every branch of

* *Dharma* literally means something akin to the word "nature," such as the *Dharma* of fire is "to burn," but here it means "morals and moral laws." *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* were the four most important factors in the religion of the ancient Hindus. We shall discuss them later on, when dealing with the great religion preached by Krishna.

† We have already said Krishna was not a king; old Ugrasena was the king of the Vrishnis. In fact Krishna and the race in which he was born lost the privilege of ascending the throne through a curse.

knowledge, the mighty king Durjodhana, the great preceptor Kripa, the invincible Bhismaka,* the world-renowned bow-man Karna and a hundred other heroes, kings and learned men are present here. How can you offer this man the first worship when they are present? Krishna is neither a sacrificial priest, nor a preceptor, nor a king, how can you then give him the first *Argha*? If your intention, Judhisthira, was to offer the first worship to this man, why were then these kings brought here thus to be insulted? We have not paid you tribute out of fear, or temptation, or conciliation. We have paid you tribute only because you desired to obtain the Imperial Dignity from virtuous motives. But you are now insulting us. What else could be your motive, except that of insulting us, for as in the midst of this assembly of kings, you have worshipped Krishna? Who will offer worship to one who has fallen from religion?"†

* Bhismaka was the king of Prag-Jotisha (Eastern India). He was one of the most powerful kings of the age in which Krishna was born.

† This charge indicates that Krishna did not follow the existing religion.

Foaming and roaring, Shishupala turned towards Krishna who was quietly sitting in one aside ;— his ever sweet smiles playing upon his lips. But his silence exasperated the Chedi King. He turned towards him like an infuriated lion and said, "O Krishna, if these pitiable sons of Kunti are timid, if they have lost their manliness by asceticism,* you ought to have enlightened them as to your claims to the first worship. How can you accept the worship of which you are not worthy? This is no insult to the kings,—it is you whom the Kurus have insulted."

Having said this, Shishupala left the excellent seat on which he was seated. He moved towards the gate of the assembly hall, but the king Yudhis-thira hastened after him, and holding him by the hand, thus spoke to him, "O great king, what you have said does not become you. It is highly sinful and needlessly cruel. Do not insult Bhishma by erroneously thinking that he does not know what *Dharma* is. These numerous kings, who are all older than you, approve the worship offered to

* This charge against the Pandavas evidently shows that they led a strictly moral life.

Krishna. You also should approve it. Bhishma knows well what Krishna is. You do not know him so well as he does."

Shishupala was again going to give vent to his uncontrollable wrath, but as the old hoary-headed Patriarch rose to address the assembly,—growling he sat down.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BHISMA'S REPLY TO SHISHUPALA

THE old Bhishma then thus addressed the assembly, "He who does not approve of the worship offered to Krishna deserves neither soft words nor conciliation. I do not see any king in this assembly of monarchs who has not bowed his head to Krishna. I have worshipped many men who are old in knowledge. I have heard from all these wise men when they came and talked to me of the many accomplishments of Krishna. I have heard many times narrated by the people all the feats which the greatly intelligent Krishna performed since his birth. We do not worship Krishna only through caprice, or from our relationship with him, or from expected benefits to be received from him. He is worshipped by all the pious men on earth. We have offered him the first worship in consideration of his fame, his heroism, his success. There is none here, even though a child, whom we have not taken into our consideration when proposing the first worship to Krishna. There are

chiefly two reasons for offering the first worship to him. He is vastly learned in the Vedas and Vedangas ; he is also very great in prowess. Who else is there in the world who is so distinguished as he ? Liberality, cleverness, knowledge of the Vedas, bravery, modesty, achievements, intelligence, humility, beauty, firmness, contentment and prosperity,—all live for ever in Krishna.”

The great Bhishma stopped ; the inconceivable love for Krishna, that once pervaded the hearts of the stern cow-herds, maddened the simple Gopa boys and intoxicated the loving milk-maidens,—that had now cast a blissful halo over the Aryan Land,—overflowed his heart. His voice faltered,—his eyes softened,—his heart palpitated. Raising his voice to the highest pitch, he cried, “Yes we worship Krishna, because he is the Origin of the Universe, He is that in which the Universe is to be merged. He is unmanifested Primal Nature,—He is the Creator ;—He is eternal,—He is beyond all creatures.”* The voice of the old Patriarch was

* It was for the first time declared by the great Patriarch Bhishma that Krishna was no other than the Incarnation of God. It was he who first declared it ; and all the rest followed and follow till the present day.

choked,—he stopped,—he took breath,—he controlled his overflowing feelings,—his unknowable and unfathomable love for Krishna.

After a few moments, he turned towards the kings and said, "Therefore, O friends, you should approve the worship offered to him. Shishupala is a mere child. He does not know who Krishna is. He always speaks ill of him. Who is there among the old or the young, among these illustrious kings, who does not consider Krishna worthy of the first worship? We do adore him. If Shishupala considers this worship undeserved, he may do what pleases him."

Shishupala leaped up like a mass of blazing fire. "Old and infamous wretch as you are," he roared, "are you not ashamed of your conduct?*" Wish-

* In reading the life of Srikrishna our readers must not lose sight of one point,—that there is no direct biographical account of Krishna in the Mahavarata. It is however the only work in which we get some glimpses of his career when he was living in Dwarka. Therefore in knowing him, we must look to those of his contemporaries whose history Mahavarata is. In order to fully appreciate him, we must first understand the sublime characters of some of the men in the Mahavarata, such as Bhishma, Vidura and others. We find that a man like Bhishma was the first to declare him to be not only the first man of his age, but as the Supreme Deity in

ing to praise Krishna, you describe him before me as great and superior in knowledge and age, as if I know nothing ! 'This man is the foremost of all wise men,' and 'This man is the Lord of the Universe,' hearing your these words, Krishna believes that they are all true. Nothing could be a greater lie. Surely do you live at the mercy of these kings!" The old Patriarch rose again. "Truly," said he, "do I live at the mercy of kings ! But I do not consider them as worth a straw."

human form,—a character in which he is still adored and worshipped all over India. As we do not possess any direct biographical accounts of Krishna, we are not at all in a position to judge him and his character ; for we get very few incidents of his life and little of his teachings to form our opinion of him, if we are at all capable of doing it. But Bhishma was great in age, knowledge, experience, learning and virtue ; in fact he was a personage whose equal may hardly be found in the history of any part of the world. It would therefore be proper for us to follow great Bhishma to understand Srikrishna. As our ancestors have unfortunately left no direct history of the greatest Man on earth, it would be our duty to know him through others who saw his deeds, who heard his teachings, who associated with him, and who knew him best. Bhishma, Vidura and others saw him and knew him well,—and it was they who declared him not only to be the first man of his age, but the Supreme One Incarnate. Those of our readers who do not understand Krishna as Bhishma did, to them we say, as Yudhisthira said to Shishupala, "Bhishma knows well what Krishna is. You do not know him so well as he does."

Thus addressed by Bhishma, the kings became exceedingly angry. Some amongst them stood erect, some began to abuse him and others cried, "This sinful wretch Bhishma, though old, is exceedingly boastful. He deserves no pardon. Let this wicked man be killed like an animal, or let him be burnt in a fire made of straw."

Availing himself of this opportunity, Shishupala turned to the kings and said, "When I am here to be your general, what are you thinking now? In battle array let us stand against the Vrisnis and the Pandavas." Many of the kings said, "Yes, we must act in such a way as the final sacrificial rites to be performed by Yudhisthira and this worship of Krishna may not be supposed to have our acquiescence." They then all began to consult how to obstruct the completion of the Sacrifice. "It became evident," the ancient chronicler says, "that the undeteriorating vast sea of kings with its countless waves of soldiers was making preparations for a fight. Having seen that assembly of kings agitated by anger, as the fearful ocean is lashed by the wind at the time of the universal dissolution, Yudhisthira thus spoke to that foremost of all intelligent men, the grandsire of the Kurus, the

aged Bhishma ;—‘This vast ocean of kings has been agitated by wrath. O Grandsire, tell me what should be now done?’ ‘O best of the Kurus,’ replied the old Patriarch, ‘do not be alarmed. Can a dog kill the lion? These kings are merely barking at the sleeping lion of the Vrisni race.’ ”

He then turned towards the assembled kings and said, “O rulers of earth, I do not see the end of our speeches, for words may be answered with words. Therefore listen to what I say. Here is Krishna present. Him have we worshipped. Let him who opposes this worship challenge him to a fight. This will settle the matter without further ado.”

Roaring and foaming the wrathful Shishupala rose and cried, “O Krishna, I challenge you. Come fight with me till I kill you with all the Pandavas.”

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE DEATH OF SHISHUPALA

SLOWLY and majestically rose Krishna, his sweet smiles still playing on his lips. There was no anger,—not even the slightest displeasure,—in his heart. When a tempest was raging all around him,—when the strongest abuses were showered upon him by the angry Shishupala, and the highest encomiums were given him by the great Bhishma,—he sat quite unconcerned. But now being challenged to fight, he, as a warrior, could no longer hold his peace. Calmly rose he, and then addressed the assembled kings thus.* “O kings, this cruel-hearted man is born of a lady of our race, but he is our great enemy. Though we never seek to injure him, yet he always tries to do us harm. Hearing that we had gone to the city of Prag-jotisha,† this man of cruel deeds came and

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chap, XLV., Slokas 6—14.

† Eastern India. Perhaps it refers to the war that Krishna waged with king Naraka. See our note in page 105.

burnt our city of Dwarka, though he was the son of my aunt. When the Bhoja king* was sporting on the Raivataka hill, this man killed many of that king's attendants and carried away many in chains to his own city. In order to thwart my father's Sacrifice, this sinful man stole the horse of the *Ashamedha*.† This man of sin stole the wife of the saintly Akrura when she was on her way to the country of the Sauvaras. This wretch ravished in the disguise of the king of Karusha the pious Bhadra, the princess of Vishala, who was the intended bride of the Karusha king. I have patiently borne all his sins and crimes for the sake of my father's sister,—I promised her to pardon his one hundred offences. That number is now full. It is fortunate that all this had happened to-day in the presence of all the kings of India. I shall no longer pardon him ; I shall kill him in the presence of you all." Shishupala roared,

* One of the Aryan clans of Mathura was called the Bhojas.

† Horse-Sacrifice. A horse is let loose in this ceremony. It roamed over the country for a certain time. A warrior with an army followed it as its guard, and if any body caught it or stole it, a battle was fought with him. The horse was finally brought back and sacrificed with due rites.

“O Krishna, if you please, pardon me or pardon me not. What can you do to me through good will or anger?”

The great sacrificial ground became the arena of an extraordinary tournament. The universal joy and merriment soon turned into a general grief and anxiety. Yudhishthira's countenance was a picture of misery,—Bhima grinded his teeth in anger,—Arjuna sorrowfully rose to arrange the field,—but great Bhishma was full of joy and pride, for he knew it would be a mere child's play for Krishna to defeat and kill the sinful Chedi king.

Every thing was soon arranged for the great combat. The charioteers of Krishna and Shishupala brought their respective cars. The great generalissimo of the imperial army of Jarasandha and the greatest hero of the age, armed themselves with their bows and arrows and entered the list. Thousands and thousands of men who had come to see the great Sacrifice hastened now to witness this wonderful tournament. Calm and cool stood Krishna, till the same sweet smiles played on the same beautiful lips,—handsome and charming as ever. In his front foamed and roared the wrathful Shishupala,—a giant with fire flashing from his eyes.

All hearts palpitated,—all were in anxiety and eagerness.

But the combat though severe was but short. Shishupala's head soon rolled on the ground, and those kings that backed him were struck dumb with fear. They silently returned to their respective abodes and dared not utter a word against Krishna or against the Pandavas.*

* There are two different versions of this incident in the Mahavarata. Sava Parva, Chap. XII., slokas 21—26, says : "When Shishupala was thus talking, the high-souled slayer of Madhu (Krishna) pondered in his mind on the discus that humbled the pride of the Daityas. As soon as the discus came into his hands, that skilful speaker, the high-souled Krishna thus loudly spoke, 'O rulers of earth, hear why this man has been hitherto pardoned by me. Asked by his mother I promised to pardon his one hundred offences. This was the boon that she asked of me and this was the boon that I granted her. O kings, that number has now become full. I shall now kill him in the presence of the kings.' Having said this, the chief of the Yadu race, that chastiser of foes, Krishna, immediately cut off in anger with his discus the head of the Chedi king. That heavy-armed hero fell like a cliff struck by thunder. The kings saw a fearful effulgence from the body of the Chedi king issuing like that of the sun in the sky. That effulgence then adored the lotus-eyed Krishna ever worshipped by all the worlds; and it then entered Krishna's body."

But in Udyoga Parva, Chap. XXII., Slokas 27-29, we find king Dhritarashtra thus describes the incident. "Formerly

Undisturbed and unobstructed the great Sacrifice was then completed. The invited guests began to disperse. The ancient chronicler goes on to say :—“Thereupon all the kings came to the virtuous Judhisthira and said, ‘Sire, you have grown in prosperity through good fortune. You have now acquired the Imperial Dignity. The fame of the Ajamira* race has been greatly enhanced by you. You have acquired great religious merit by this act. O best of kings, we tell you that we have been welcomed and received by you to our heart’s content. We now desire to return to our own kingdoms. Give us permission to go.’ Having heard what they said, the virtuous Judhisthira worshipped them as each deserved

in the Rajsuya Sacrifice, the king of Chedi, Krishna, and also other rulers of earth assembled with innumerable warriors. Amongst them all, the Chedi king was most powerful; he was the greatest bow-man and an invincible warrior in battle. Within a short time the exalted Krishna defeated him and damped the courage of the other kings. Seeing the lion-like Krishna on his chariot, the kings that followed the rulers of the Karushas in the honouring of the Chedi king, fled in fear like so many deer. When they escaped, Krishna easily killed Shishupala, and thus enhanced the glory of the Pandavas.” Of the two accounts we have accepted the more reasonable one.

* Ajamira was one of the ancestors of the Kuru kings.

and then commanded his brothers thus: 'All these kings have come to us of their own accord. They are now desirous of returning to their kingdoms. Escort them to the confines of our dominions.' "

When they were all gone, Krishna came to Yudhisthira and said, "Sire, with your permission I shall now go to Dwarka." "O Krishna," replied the king, "through your grace I have performed this great Sacrifice. Through your grace all the kings have come under my sway. O sinless One, how can I give you permission to go? But I know you must return to your own city."

Krishna then went to his aunt Kunti and said, "Your sons have assumed the Imperial Dignity. They have obtained vast wealth. Be pleased with all this. With your permission I shall now return to Dwarka." He then bade farewell to Draupadi and Subhadra. Then coming out of the inner apartment, he performed his ablution and daily rites of worship, the Brahmans uttering benedictions. Daruka* then brought his chariot. The high-souled and lotus-eyed Krishna walked round it,

* Daruka, was Krishna's Charioteer.

and then ascended it, and started for the city of Daravati.*

After this, there is virtually no history of Krishna for the space of thirteen years,—the period Yudhishthira and his brothers passed in exile. As soon as Krishna went away, the five Pandavas were exiled by their cousins the Kurus by various stratagems. Mahavarata being not his history, the author has almost written nothing about him when the Pandavas were roving in the forests. The accounts of their wanderings have been given in the Vana Parva of the Mahavarata. Almost whole, we may very well say, the entire Vana Parva that we now possess is an after-interpolation. A little careful study will show it,—so different is the style of writing, the form of narration,—the modern touch of the language.

We meet Krishna three times in the Vana Parva (1) He with the other Vrisnis came to see the Pandavas on hearing their exile. Krishna here gives an account of his war with Salya who had a car that floated in the sky. It is altogether an extraordinary, and we may add, a ridiculous story and can by no means be taken seriously. (2) We see him again with the Pandavas in the forest. The wrathful Rishi Durvasha with ten thousand disciples were mischievously sent by the wicked Durjodhana to the forest-abode of the Pandavas. He thought the Pandu princes would not be able to feed in the forest Durvasha with ten thousand disciples, and the result would be that they would be burnt down through the angry Rishi's curse. The Rishi appeared when the Pandavas had nothing to feed him with and his followers. Draupadi in this dire distress piteously prayed to Krishna to come and save the Pandavas. Krishna came as soon as thought of. He ate only a portion of greens that lay in the corner of the

CHAPTER XXX

KRISHNA THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT

THE cow-herd boy of *Vrindavana* had now become the greatest of all men in India. He had been adored and worshipped by innumerable men as a

cooking pot in which draupadi had cooked. By his doing this, Durvasha and his ten thousand pupils, who had gone to bathe, felt their stomach so heavy that they thought they were quite incapable of eating even a morsel more. They therefore did not return to the Pandavas, but went away in another direction. (3) We meet Krishna once more in the Vana Parva. Some colloquys follow, but there is nothing important in them.

This is all the history that we get of Krishna in Mahavarata during the period that the Pandavas were in exile. We have already said, the accounts that Vishnu Purana, Harivansa, Vagavata and other Puranas give are so palpable fictions that they can by no means be taken into serious account. They say many things no doubt, but they are all of the order,—an example of which we give below.

Once upon a time Satyabhama, one of the wives of Krishna, saw the celestial flower *Parijata* and longed to possess some. Krishna went to heaven, and fought with Indra, the king of heaven. After defeating him, he presented innumerable *Parijatas* to his wife.

They also give the accounts of many wars that Krishna waged and the many battles that he fought. We have mentioned some of them in page 105.

great prophet,—a supernatural being,—nay* the Supreme One Incarnate. Living in distant Dwarka in his city on the sea, Krishna ruled over the hearts of the Aryan Land.† The greatest heroes and the most powerful potentates had bowed down their heads before his great prowess and supreme statesmanship; the most illustrious Rishis and sages, learned scholars and great ascetics, had all given him the first place for his supernatural intelligence, his wonderful learning, his great piety,—his superhumanity in every thing. The masses had been carried away by an undescribable love for him,—the love the reason where of they did not know.‡ The sinful were terribly afraid of him,—the pious were his loving devotees. A new thought, a new

But we must mention here that at this time Krishna had become a father. His eldest son was named Pradumna. But the Puranas say that he had many thousands of sons from his many hundreds of wives. They also mention that one of his sons Samba married the daughter of Durjodhana. See our note in pages 98-99.

* Bhishma was the greatest man of that age. We have seen that even he considered Krishna to be an Incarnation of the Supreme Being.

† See Mahavarata. Udjoga Parva, Chapter XXXIV., Slokas 10-29.

‡ See Vagavata, Skanda X., Chap. 60th, Sloka 20.

religion, a new happiness now rolled over the land of the Aryans from one end to the other.

The rule of such tyrants as Kansa, Shishupala, Jarasandha and others had been replaced by that of such a pious and virtuous ruler as Judhisthira. The little kingdom of love and devotion, beauty and sublimity, that Krishna founded in the beautiful forests of *Vrindavana* had now extended far and wide,—from the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to the dense forests in the south, from the Vrisni city of Dwarka in the west to Bhismaka's great kingdom in the east.

He was a great Mystery to all, but all the same the people loved him with all their heart. They worshipped and adored him, they feared and respected him, they called him God, preceptor, father, protector and friend.

But what sort of life did Krishna himself lead? He was the greatest warrior who had defeated all others; he was the most powerful general, commanding the mighty army of the Gopas; he was the greatest statesman, the adviser of the great king Judhisthira and all the monarchs of *Aryavarta*; he was the great diplomat who had brought all the quarrelling Aryan chiefs under one pious Emperor,

thus bringing in peace and happiness to the millions of persecuted and down-trodden men; he was the greatest of all learned men, whom the great Rishis revered; he was the great religious teacher who had introduced a wonderful religion amongst the Aryan races, thereby raising them to the highest status of civilisation; he was the great centre from which flowed all love, all beauty and sublimity, all happiness and bliss. But he himself led a very simple life. He said, "I am indifferent alike to my home and body. I am happy in my own self."* Living always in the whirlpool of worldly affairs, he was the greatest ascetic that was ever born in the world. He was a Master over Matter as well as Spirit. He ruled over both, and therefore he was superhuman. Wherever he lived, it was a land of joy and merriment,* and wherever he went, people felt an undescribable bliss and happiness. He had maddened all India, as he once did the little *Vrindavana* and *Mathura*.

* What did Krishna mean by "I am happy in my own self?" *Chhandagya Upanishad* say :—He, who seeing this, believing this, is deep in his own self, who sports with his own self, whose friend and companion is his own self, whose self is his only pleasure, is the king of himself."

He was Nature personified. He was as high, stern, hard and majestic as the Himalayas; he was as humble, soft, sweet and sublime as the *Jamuna*. He was as fearful as the roaring tempest cracking the tallest trees; he was as lovely and charming as the sweet moon-beam playing on the blossoming flowers. What was he? The men that saw him did not know him,—how could we?

Thus did He live in Dwarka,—the greatest Man of all men living. Adored and worshipped by all,—universally loved and feared, respected and obeyed, His was a towering Personality,—a wonderful Man among men; but yet He was a great Mystery,—none could understand Him, nor His works, nor His teachings, nor what and who He was. His Life and His Teachings were the Beacon Light that guided,—and will ever guide,—the humanity to the ever-lasting Land of Bliss.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE BANISHMENT OF THE PANDAVAS

As soon as Krishna turned his steps towards Dwarka, the good king Yudhisthira was challenged to a game of dice by his jealous cousin Duryodhana, who could not bear the sight of his prosperity. He consulted with his wicked brothers and more wicked uncle Sakuni. There was no chance of robbing great Yudhisthira of his Imperial Dignity by an open war. They, therefore,—sinful as they were,—conspired to win his wealth and empire by a trick. They challenged him to a game of dice.*

Yudhisthira was defeated at every step. He lost all his wealth,—all his imperial treasures, his kingdom and empire,—nay finally his loving brothers, his beloved wife and even himself. He

* In ancient India, the Aryan warriors considered it to be the greatest cowardice to decline when challenged either to a fight or to a play. Yudhisthira, though very weak in the game of dice, had no other alternative but to accept the challenge.

got back his brothers and wife, however, by agreeing to go to exile for thirteen years and by vowing that the last year of his exile he would remain unrecognised and undiscovered. If his whereabouts in any way become known during that period, he would again go to exile for another thirteen years.

The king, who only recently assumed the Imperial Dignity by performing the great Rajsuya Sacrifice left his magnificent city of Indraprastha in the ascetic garb, followed by his loving brothers and his beloved wife Draupadi,—all the people weeping aloud at their departure. The great structure that Krishna had built crumbled down as soon as he turned his back.

He heard of the disaster that had befallen the Pandavas and went to see them ; they were then living in the deep forest. He went twice more to see them during the long period of their exile. The great Yudhishthira, the embodiment of truth, passed through this ordeal,—his terrible thirteen years' exile ;—and he kept his word.

Thirteen long years thus passed away. The Pandavas were able to escape the vigilance of the Kurus and to remain unrecognised and undis-

covered in the thirteenth year of their miserable exile.* They passed the year as the menial servants of the king of Birata.†

On the last day of the stipulated period Judhithira introduced himself to the Birata king as the Pandava monarch of Indraprastha. He and his brothers and their ever beloved queen, Draupadi, were most cordially welcomed. They were received with all possible respect and honour. The king made Judhithira sit on his throne, and the fact was proclaimed all over the country.

The king of Birata then pressed that his daughter Uttara might be accepted as a gift. She was a princess as beautiful as beauty itself; she was most accomplished and highly gifted; she was

* After passing twelve years in different parts of the country, they lived the thirteenth year in the city of the Birata king in different disguises. We need not say that they met with various adventures. One Parva of the Mahavarata, namely the Birata Parva, is devoted to the narration of these adventures. There is no mention of Krishna in this Parva except that he came to attend the marriage of his nephew Abhimanyu.

† Judhithira was the king's gentleman-in-waiting; Bhima was the cook; Arjuna, the dancing master of the king's daughter; Nakula, the keeper of horses; and Sahadeva, that of the cattle. Draupadi was the queen's hand-maid.

as simple and innocent as a child. The king Judhisthira accepted the loving present of their kind host, and he agreed to marry her with his beloved nephew Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna.*

The marriage was in due time solemnised in great pomp and grandeur. All the friends and relatives of the Pandavas came to attend the festivities. The Vrisnis with their leaders, Krishna and Rama, and the Panchalas with their head, the old king Drupada and his most heroic son, Dhristadumna, came and made the kingdom of Birata resound with their joyous shouts.

When the festivities were over, the thought of the Pandavas' getting back their kingdom naturally rose uppermost in everybody's mind. One day in full court Krishna thus addressed the friends, relatives and allies of the Pandavas,† "It is known to you all how by a trick king Judhisthira was defeated by Sakuni in a game of dice, how he was robbed of his kingdom, and how he was exiled. The

* Abhimanyu was the only son of Subhadra, the wife of Arjuna and the sister of Krishna. He was at this time about sixteen years of age. As he was a pupil of Krishna in arms.—young as he was,—he was a great warrior.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap. I.

Pandavas have fulfilled their austere vow to live in exile for thirteen years. Therefore we should now consider what is best for Judhisthira and also for Durjodhana. We should consider what is right, suitable, and calculated to redound to the glory of the illustrious Kurus. The virtuous king Judhisthira does not want even the kingdom of heaven by wrongful means. He would rather prefer the right-ful possession of a single village. King Judhisthira with his friends always wishes all prosperity to the Kurus. The intentions of Durjodhana are not known to us ; therefore let a virtuous, holy, noble-born and wileless man go as an ambassador to the Kuru king. Let him persuade the Kurus to give the Pandavas half of the kingdom they possessed.”*

* The hero of the Udjoga Parva is Krishna ;—he is all through its chapters. We cannot say that the entire Udjoga Parva is an after-addition, for if there is no Udjoga Parva, the remaining Parvas of the Mahavarata become meaningless. If the battle was really fought, some preparations and negotiations must have been made and carried on by both the contending parties. Therefore we are bound to accept much of the Udjoga Parva as matters based on facts. But interpolations are also too often met with. We shall point out as we proceed what we reject. We shall try, however, to adhere to the original descriptions as much as possible.

Rama said, "When the heroic sons of our aunt Kunti are willing to forego half of their kingdom, the sons of Dhritarastra should give up that half. I should be glad if some one were to go to the Kurus and bring about good feelings amongst the Kurus and the Pandavas."

Then spoke Satyaki.* He was for war,—war pure and simple. He exclaimed, "They won Judhisthira's kingdom by a trick; how can prosperity attend such scoundrels? Why should the Pandavas approach them in a humiliating spirit? Let us march against them with our armies and inflict on them the punishment they so well deserve."

Then king Drupada spoke. He said, "In my opinion the suggestion of Rama is not appropriate. The son of Dhritarastra ought by no means to be addressed in a conciliatory spirit. I think it is impossible to bring the ill-natured Durjodhana to reason by peaceful means. Let us, therefore, make preparations and send words to our friends to collect

* Satyaki was a great Vrisni warrior, nearly related to Krishna. He learned the science of arms from Krishna, and therefore he and Abhimanyu were next to Arjuna in the art of archery.

armies. And let my priest, this learned Brahman, go to Durjodhana and tell him the views of the king Judhisthira."

"Our relations with the Kurus and the Pandavas," said Krishna, "are the same. We have come here invited for the wedding. The ceremony being now over, we shall go back to our own homes. If the sons of Dhritarastra do not seek peace, then summoning all others, last of all send word to us."*

The invited chiefs parted. King Drupada's priest went to the Kuru court. Messengers were also sent round to all the chiefs and potentates to come to the aid of the Pandavas. Preparations were being made on all sides,—for everybody knew that the Kurus would not part with even an acre of land without a mortal struggle.†

* It is quite evident that Krishna was all along for peace. His words plainly meant that he would have nothing to do with the coming struggle. His words indicate he preferred to be let alone in his island city, though he knew that was impossible.

† The dialogues are long, but we have given them in brief. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapters I. to V.,

CHAPTER II

KRISHNA AS CHARIOTEER

THE mission of Drupada's priest had failed. Durjodhana had declared that he would not part with a single village, not to speak of half the kingdom. He too had sent word to his allies and friends to collect their armies and to join him on the plains of Kurukshetra.* He made every preparation to give the Pandavas a warm reception.

All India was in a stir. The chiefs and potentates from the remotest corner of the vast Aryan land hastened to join either the Pandavas or the Kurus. It was in fact a struggle between the heroic Panchalas, who stood by the five Pandavas, and the great Kurus who followed the standard of their proud prince Durjodhana.

The two clans were hereditary enemies. Nothing could have given the Panchalas more pleasure than an invasion of the Kuru-country. The

* The field of Kurukshetra lies north of Delhi. It is a great Hindu pilgrimage.

Kurus at the same time took the greatest pleasure in taking fire and sword into their enemy's vast dominions. Hardly was there any chance of these two clans' coming to a peaceful settlement. The Pandavas were willing for peace,—for it was not pleasant for them to fight against their own kith and kin, but the Panchalas were not. They could not forget the insult that was heaped by the wicked Durjodhana and his brothers on their most beloved princess Draupadi.* They could not rest satisfied unless they saw the blood of those that insulted their king's daughter. Thus war became inevitable ; and both parties girded up their loins to engage in a mortal struggle on the plains of Kurukshetra.

But both the contending parties were eager to know what course Krishna would adopt in the ensuing struggle. They all knew that victory would declare to those with whom the great Krishna would side with his tremendous discus.† Both

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva.

† Discus is the emblematical weapon of God Vishnu whose incarnation Krishna is said to be. But it appears that the chief weapon of Krishna was a discus,—a circular steel instrument with sharp edges all round,—often used by the Aryan

were eager to secure him and his invincible Gopa army. Therefore Arjuna and Durjodhana both hastened to Dwarka. We shall now quote the ancient chronicler.

“The two Kuru chiefs, Arjuna and Durjodhana having reached Dwarka, found Krishna asleep. Durjodhana came first and sat down on the excellent seat that stood near the head of the Vrisni prince. Then came Arjuna. He sat down on the floor near his feet. Krishna, having awakened, first saw the Pandu prince, and then the great Kuru prince. He welcomed them both and did them due honour. He then asked the cause of their coming. ‘It is befitting,’ said Durjodhana, ‘that you should lend me your help in this war, for your friendship with myself and with Arjuna is equal. Our relationship with you also is similar. Besides I have come to you first. From the days of yore the good men have always befriended him who was first to come. You, O Krishna, are the best and the greatest man in the world. You should act according to the Ordinance.’

warriors. The warrior who used it whirled it on his finger and then threw it at an enemy. Krishna’s discus appear to have been a tremendous weapon of offence.

‘I have not the slightest doubt,’ replied Krishna, ‘that you came here first ; but as Arjuna has been first seen by me, I shall help you both. The sacred books say that younger persons should be helped before their elders ; therefore, I think I must give Arjuna the first chance to ask help from me. I have two offers to make to you, namely, there is my large army of Gopas, each of whom is capable of slaying me ; they are known by the name of Narayanas, and they are invincible in battle. Let them be the army of one party, and let myself who have resolved not to wield arms in this battle, go to the other party. O Arjuna, decide either according to your liking.’

The Pandu prince submissively said, ‘O Krishna I choose you. Let us have you,—armed or unarmed,’ ‘Yes,’ exclaimed Durjodhana in joy, ‘I have no objection. Let me have your great army.’

Durjodhana then went to Rama. ‘O great king,’ said Valadeva, ‘I have resolved neither to help the Kurus nor the Pandavas in this battle. I shall remain neutral. You are born of the great Bharata tribe,—go and fight in strict accordance with the rules of honour and war.’

Then Durjodhana went to the other chiefs of Dwarka. Some took his side and some that of Arjuna. The great Kritavarma* with his stupendous army went over to his side, but the invincible Satyaki and his army followed Arjuna.

Durjodhana having departed, Krishna said to Arjuna. "Knowing that I shall not take any part in the battle, why have you chosen me?" "O foremost of men," replied Arjuna, "I know you can alone slay them all. I too am alone able to do it. You are already the most illustrious, but I am still a seeker after fame. Therefore I shall destroy them without the help of your all-destroying arms," "O friend," said Krishna, "what can I do for you in this battle?" "It has been my desire," said Arjuna "to make you charioteer. You should fulfil this my desire." "Very well," replied he, "I shall be your charioteer in this battle."†

* Kritavarma was a great Bhoja warrior.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter VII.

CHAPTER III

SANJAYA'S EMBASSY

THE Panchalas with their head, the great king Drupada and their illustrious prince Dhristadyumna with all their allies and friends, accompanied by innumerable other chiefs and protentates with their powerful armies, encamped at Upaplavya,* a place near the plains of Kurukshetra. Each and every one of that seven *Akhauhinies* of warriors was determined to fight to his utmost, so that the good and the virtuous Pandavas might be placed on the throne of their ancestral kingdom.

The old blind king Dhritarastra grew greatly alarmed. Though he knew that his sons had collected a larger army,—a stupendous army of eleven *Akhauhinies*,—yet he was greatly afraid of Bhima, Arjuna and Krishna.† An undescribable terror

* Upaplavya was a small village near the field of Kurukshetra.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter XII, Slokas 9 to 28. Dhritarastra's speech.

seized him. He had a misgiving that the extinction of the great Kuru race was near at hand.

The old and weak-minded Kuru king, too fond of his sinful sons, unable to persuade them to give up the just dues to the Pandavas, thought of stopping this sanguinary war and of saving the lives of his sons by taking advantage of the piety and goodness of the good and virtuous Yudhisthira. He sent Sanjaya to Upaplavya, asking him to induce Yudhisthira to abandon the idea of battle, by pointing out to him the great sin that is always incurred in war and blood-shed, in the slaughter of fellow-men, and in the ruin of innumerable homes.

Sanjaya came and was welcomed by the Pandavas in all honour and respect. He then, inquiring after the health of all, thus addressed the Pandava king, "We can not know beforehand what befalls to the lot of a man. For this reason, O son of Pandu, you have met with very troubles? You will no doubt by means of your great wisdom make up for all of them. You will surely so make it up that there will be peace amongst the Kurus and the Panchalas. A mean act does not befit you. If you act meanly, it will be like a black spot on white cloth. Who will perform an act

which will cause the destruction of all and lead men to hell? Blessed are those that promote the interests of their cousins. If after subjugating the Kurus and defeating all, you destroy those who despise you, then the remaining portion of your life will be no better than death. What is life after killing your own cousins? I do not find the slightest good, O great king, in your victory or defeat. Why should Pandavas do a wicked act like other mean people? With folded hands I throw myself under your protection, that there may be peace amongst the Kurus and the Panchalas."

"What words of mine, O Sanjaya," replied Judhisthira, "have ever meant war? Having secured peace, who ever wished for war? O Sanjaya, I am always ready to make peace as you ask me to do. Let Indraprastha be my kingdom. Let the revered king of the Kurus give it back to me."

"That you are attached to virtue," said Sanjaya,* "is well-known to all. But the life that

* We would ask our readers to carefully read the speech of Sanjaya, for it will hereafter enable them to better understand the religion of Srikrishna. They will find that he preached before the Pandava king a religion which is akin

is full of great deeds is also mortal. Knowing this, you should not bring about the destruction of the Kurus, even if they do not give back your kingdom. In my opinion to live as a beggar is better than to possess a kingdom obtained by means of war. As a man's life lasts but for a short time, as it is ever subject to sufferings, and as it is unstable and mortal, you should never commit a sin. *Kama* (desire) is the source of all impediments to virtue. Thirst for wealth is the great bond of the world. The man, who desires pleasures, becomes degraded for the sake of pleasures. A man who makes virtue his chief object of life gains great fame in this life, and he shines like the sun in the next. A sinful man, even if he obtains the earth, is a ruined man both here and here-after. You have read the Vedas, you have practised the hard austerities of *Bramhachariya*, you have performed great Sacrifices, you have kept the other

to those that still are the most favoured religions of the world. He preached the religion of forgiveness, goodness, piety and virtue at *all times and conditions and in all circumstances without any deviation whatsoever*. But Krishna also preached a religion of forgiveness, goodness, piety and virtue but with a great *proviso*. This is the grandest aspect of his grand religion. See his speech in the next chapter.

world always before your mind, you should not now commit sin. O Judhisthira, in the next world, there is no absolute annihilation either of the virtuous or vicious deeds. The deeds performed here bear fruit in the next world. If actuated by the desire of possessing wealth and kingdom, you wage a war now, you have in vain then so long led such a pure, holy and virtuous life. Only an unwise and sinful man obtains prosperity by fighting. A wise and virtuous man rather loses his prosperity than obtains it by fighting. Your instinct does not urge you to commit a sin. Therefore do not through anger commit a sinful act. Anger is the cause of all sins. It ought to be controlled by all means. O king, control your wrath; do not flood the earth with human blood. After killing your grand-father, uncle, brothers, cousins, relatives and friends, and after raising heart-rending lamentations of millions of women all over India, what pleasure would you be able to enjoy, though you will be then the lord of the earth? Having obtained even the whole world, will you be able to rid yourself of decrepitude or death? If you are desirous of committing this sin, simply because your advisers wish it, then

abdicate everything to them and go away. You should not forsake the path of virtue."* "Undoubtedly, O Sanjaya," replied Judhishthira, "is it so as you say. But you must first know whether it is the path of virtue or vice that I am following in waging this war. Krishna is the lord of virtue, he is vastly learned in all the sciences and learning. Let good Krishna say if I am to blame in not making peace. I shall not act against his advice."

* Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter XIII to XXVIII.

CHAPTER IV

KRISHNA AND SANJAYA

“O SANJAYA,” said Krishna,* “I always desire long life, prosperity and good of the Pandavas as well as of the king Dhritarastra with all his sons. I desire, that there should be peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas. I never give them any other advice. King Judhisthira, I know, is ever for peace. But the great king Dhritarastra and his

* This is the first time that our readers meet Krishna in this little book giving out his views about religion and morals. We have said that he founded a religion, and we have also said that he preached it. We have added that his grand religion was the main cause of his being considered as not only the first man in India but as the Supreme One Incarnate. But neither Vishnu Purana nor Harivansa gives any instance in which he gives out his religious views, except in isolated lines, or except where he led the Gopas to perform the Hill-Sacrifice. Vagavata in its eleventh Book gives an elaborate dialogue between Krishna and Udhya— a long sermon on religion, philosophy and theology delivered by Krishna. It is a wonderful sermon,—unequalled by the religious teachings in any other works. We shall speak more about it when later on we come to deal with the teachings of Srikrishna.

sons are very avaricious,—it is, therefore, difficult to establish peace between them and the Pandavas. It is no wonder, under the circumstances, that their quarrel should daily grow bitter. You know, O Sanjaya, what *Dharma** is. Then why do you find fault with king Yudhisthira, who is ever ready to perform his duty ?”

“Some say, ‘Knowledge’ is the way to salvation and others say ‘Work’† is the way to it. But, O Sanjaya, as without eating hunger is never satisfied, so only Knowledge minus Works can produce no

In the Mahavarata we often meet with instances in which Krishna gives out his views on religion and morals. The most important of them all is the celebrated Gita.—his sermon to Arjuna just before the battle of Kurukshetra. We meet with many passages in the Adi and Sava Parva, from which we can glean his views, but the first time we meet in the Udjoga Parva one or two of his long lectures on religion and morals. His reply to Sanjaya is a case in point. It covered 58 Slokas of Chapter XXIX., Udjoga Parva. We have, however, given only the gist of his views. The readers will mark the difference between the religious views of Sanjaya and those of Krishna.

* See our note in page 29. Part I.

† These two words are used to explain the two celebrated Sanskrit words, *Jnana* and *Karma*. The latter word is sometime translated by “action.” We shall deal with them elaborately later on.

result. As thirst is instantly quenched by drinking water, so such works should be performed in this world the results of which can be immediately perceived. Behold, O Sanjaya, wind blows through work and sun causes day and night through work. The sleepless moon rises in the sky, fire burns, and the earth carries weights all through Work. Work is supreme in Nature. If this be the case, if man must work,—if he is bound by Nature to act, should he not perform what *ought* to be performed ?* You know the duties of every order of men, why do you then plead the cause of the Kurus? The duty of a king is to protect his kingdom and his subjects, to make donations to the pious men and to support all the poor and the helpless, to study the Vedas, to perform great Sacrifices, to take to wife, and to lead a purely virtuous life. A bad king will not observe all these. He will be desirous of obtaining the wealth of others, will grow inhuman, and turn to be a tyrant. A thief who steals wealth unseen and one who robs by force are both equally sinful. What difference is there, I ask, O Sanjaya, between Durjodhana and

* All this has been elaborately dealt with in the Gita.

a thief? The sons of Dhritarastra robbed the Pandavas of their just inheritance and thus set at naught the duties of kings. Should not a robber be punished? Should that which is ours be allowed to be taken away by others? Under the circumstances would it be not praiseworthy to be killed while fighting?"

"Then again look at their conduct in the Council-Hall. They forcibly brought before the court the beloved wife of the Pandavas, the blameless Panchala princess, Draupadi. They heaved over her the grossest insults, they dragged her by her hair, they attempted to undress her, they called her to sit on their laps, they insulted her in every possible way; and none, not the old king, not even Bhishma, except good Vidura, raised his voice in her defence. Are not the Pandavas morally bound to make an attempt to inflict just punishment on the insulters of their wife?"

Krishna smilingly added, "You did not, O Sanjaya, speak a word when Draupadi was being insulted before you. You now preach morality to the Pandavas!"

He then turned towards the Pandavas and said, "I wish to go to the Kurus and make an

attempt to bring about a settlement. I hope the sons of Dhritarastra will listen to me when I shall speak to them the words of wisdom based on virtue and humanity." Then turning to Sanjaya he said, "I hope the Kurus will treat me with respect when I shall go amongst them."

"After bidding adieu to all," said Sanjaya, "I shall now go away. Pardon me if any harsh words have fallen from my lips. Let happiness and prosperity be yours."

"Adieu, O learned man," said Judhisthira, "do not think ill of us. Let there be peace between ourselves and our cousins. Give us but five villages, and we shall be satisfied. Thus let there be peace ; let brothers follow brothers and fathers unite with sons ; let the Panchalas meet the Kurus with smiling faces. O Sanjaya, tell them I am ready for peace ; I am also prepared for war. War or peace lies with them."*

* This chapter is culled from Chap. XXIX. to Chap. XXXI., Mahavarata.

CHAPTER V

KRISHNA AND THE PANDAVAS

ON the extensive field of Upaplavya lay encamped the great Panchala army.* As far as eye could see, innumerable canvas-sheds were seen as so many swans on the blue water of a lake. Chiefs and pontentates from the furthest end of the Aryan land with their countless soldiers, thousands of horses, elephants and chariots, had their tents all around the ever heroic Panchala army. In the midst of them all stood the magnificent camp of the Pandavas. Each and every one of those seven *Akhauhini*s of warriors panted to rush upon the wicked Kurus and to flood the earth with their blood.†

* Between the Chap. XXI., the departure of Sanjaya, and Chap. LXXII., the conversations between the Pandavas and Krishna, there are no less than fifty long chapters, but they are so palpable interpolations that we can very well reject them. Besides there is nothing in them important in respect of the career of Krishna.

† See the end of Udjoga Parva and the beginning of Bhishma Parva.

But there was one amongst those innumerable men who stood ready to start for Hastinapur to meet the Kurus and to make a last attempt to bring them to their senses and to secure peace amongst the Panchalas and the Kurus, and thus to prevent the extermination of the Aryan races. Krishna stood ready to start, but the Pandavas were not willing that he should go into the camp of the enemy.* “It is not my wish, O Krishna,” said Yudhishthira, “that you should go to the Kurus. Though you will speak in a most friendly manner, Duryodhana will not listen to you. In my opinion, O Krishna, it is not proper for you to go into the midst of our enemies.” “O great king,” replied Krishna, “I know the vicious nature of the sons of Dhritarashtra, but you need not feel any anxiety for me. My going will not be without results ;—at least we shall not be blamed by others that we did not desire for peace till the last ”

“As you please, O Krishna,” said Yudhishthira. “May all good come out of it ! May you return in health and with success ! You know us and you

* These speeches are long. As they have no historical value, we give them in brief.

know our enemies. You know what would be to our good, and you know also what to say. You are my beloved brother and dear friend ; establish such peace amongst the Bharatas that we may all live in contentment." "O great king," replied Krishna, "a life-long practice of *Bramhacharjya* (asceticism) is not the proper course of life for a warrior. A warrior should not gain his livelihood by begging. Victory or death in a battle has been ordained to a warrior by the Father of the Universe. Therefore you should never show a humiliating spirit. You will never obtain your just rights if you have a humiliating spirit. Therefore, O great king, show your prowess and conquer your enemies. Let all your soldiers be prepared for battle and let them be careful about their horses, elephants and chariots. O great king, collect together all that ought to be kept ready for battle. I shall look into their intentions. Observing their army and preparations, I shall return. I shall try my best to bring about peace. But I anticipate war by all means."

Then he looked at Bhima, who said, "O Krishna, speak in such a way as there may be peace amongst the Kurus. Do not frighten them

with the prospect of war. Resentful, wrathful and vain, Durjodhana should be treated with courtesy. We should rather, O Krishna, follow the lead of Durjodhana and be under his control, but let not the Kuru race be annihilated. I say this with the approval of the king. Arjuna is kindness itself, he is never for war." "How is it," said Krishna, "O great hero, that you now desire peace,—you who have passed thirteen long years, vowing destruction to Durjodhana and others? Does your heart tremble with fear? Are you filled with despair?"

"You regard me," replied Bhima, "in a different light. I am exceedingly in a cheerful mood at the prospect of war. And you know very well my prowess. I have no fear from all the worlds enraged against me. But I am showing good will out of mercy. I am prepared to bear all hardships if the great Kuru race is not annihilated."

"O great hero," replied Krishna, "I know the greatness of your soul. I know also what prowess you possess. I do not find fault with you."

"O Krishna," said Arjuna, "all that ought to be said has been spoken by the king (Judhisthira). But hearing your words, it appears to me that you

do not consider peace as easily obtainable. You are the best will-wisher of both the Kurus and the Pandavas. Act in such a way as there may be peace. Whatever you will desire to do after mature deliberation will be accepted by us all with all respect."

"I shall," said Krishna, "try to accomplish what would be for the good of both the Kurus and the Pandavas. But all is not in my power. Land is tilled and watered by action, but without rain, it can not be made to yield crops. Under such circumstances irrigation which can be done by man should be resorted to. But irrigation is impossible if draught is brought about through the divine agency. The affairs of the world are accomplished by human exertions prompted by divine providence. I can do only that which is capable of being accomplished by human beings."*

* The conversations given above occupy eight chapters, from Chap. LXXII. to LXXIX.

CHAPTER VI

KRISHNA AND DRAUPADI

“O LORD,” said Nakula, who was longing for war, “you have heard the words of the king who knows what righteousness is. You have heard that Bhimasena dwell on peace ; you have heard what Arjuna has said, but shut your mind to all this, and do what you think proper.”*

“But,” exclaimed young Sahadeva, “you should act only in that way by which there shall be war. If even the Kurus desire for peace, still provoke war. How can my wrath be appeased without killing Durjodhana, who insulted the Panchala princess in the open court ?”

“Sahadeva has spoken the truth,” said Satyaki, “our wrath can be appeased only by killing Durjo-

* Though these speeches have no historical value, yet they give us some idea of the men whose accounts we write. They were penned by the ancient chronicler to depict the character of his work,—the men whom he personally knew. (See our remarks in the Introduction).

We are, however, giving them in brief. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap. LXXX.

dhana. He has echoed the opinion of all the warriors present here."

His words were greeted with loud cheers from every part of that vast assembly of soldiers. They cried, "Well said, hero !" and the clatter of their arms was heard many miles away.*

Then slowly and majestically came forward the beautiful princess of Panchala, Draupadi, the queen of the Pandavas. She stood before Krishna. With eyes filled with tears and voice choked with grief, she then thus addressed him.† "Neither by peaceful means, nor by surrender, our object will be gained. Durjodhana desires peace without returning the kingdom,—without giving even five villages that the king asks for. Therefore mercy should not be shown to him. The sin that accrues from killing one who ought not to be killed is the same as that which accrues by not killing one who ought to be killed. Durjodhana and his wicked followers deserve death ; therefore if they are not killed, great sin will touch you along with

* See Mahavarata. Udjoga Parva, Chapter LXXXI.

† Draupadi's speech is a long one, occupying 49 Slokas of the Chap. LXXXII., of the Udjoga Parva. We have given the gist of it.

the Pandavas and the Panchalas with all their armies. I am the daughter of the king Drupada, I am the sister of Dhristadyumna, I am the daughter-in-law of the great Pandu, I am the queen of the Pandavas,—O Krishna, I am your friend,—till I was grossly insulted in the open court ! Shame to the skill in archery of Arjuna ! Shame to the strength of Bhimasena that Durjodhana is still alive ! If I deserve to have any favour from you, if you have any mercy on me, then, O Krishna, direct all your wrath against the wicked and sinful sons of Dhritarastra."

The ancient chronicler adds :—"Saying this, the most beautiful Panchala Princess, the lotus-eyed Draupadi, holding up her charmingly curled and deep blue coloured ringlets, which were bound up in a long beautiful braid, thus spoke to Krishna.* "These tresses were seized by Dushasana ! If Bhima and Arjuna are so mean as to desire for peace, then my old father and my mighty brothers will fight with the Kurus. My five heroic sons will fight by placing Abhimanyu

* See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva. Chap. LXXXII. Slokas 33—38.

at their head." Draupadi burst into tears. She covered her face with her hands.

Millions of swords were immediately unsheathed, bows were twanged and maces were upraised,—the great Panchala army sent up such a fearful shout that in distant Hastinapur the Kurus started up from their works.

"O beautiful princess," said Krishna, "you will soon find the Kuru women weeping. They will weep as you do now, having lost their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. If the sons of Dhritarastra do not listen to my advice, they will soon be the food for dogs and jackals. I tell you truly, O princess, stop your tears ; you will soon see your husbands as mighty kings as they were before. They will be endued with great prosperity and all their enemies will be killed."

"O Krishna," said Judhisthira, "you are the best friend of the Kurus. You are related to both parties. You are able to do what is good both for us and for the Kurus. Do what you think proper."

"I shall go," replied Krishna, "to the king Dhritarastra with the view of doing what is righteous and what is good for you and for the Kurus."

They parted, and Krishna made preparations to go to Hastinapur.*

* We must say that we have not literally translated the speeches, but we have not deviated from their import.

CHAPTER VII

JOURNEY TO HASTINAPUR

THE night passed away, and the sun rose in the clear blue sky. Krishna left Upapalavya in the moment called *Maitra* under the constellation *Revati* in the month of *Kartica*.* Listening to the auspicious and holy words recited by the Brahmans and hearing the prayers of the Rishis, having performed the customary rites in the morning and worshipped the sun and the moon, having touched the tail of a bull and paid due respects to all, having gone round the fire and looked on all auspicious objects placed before him, Krishna, clad in rich costumes and adorned with holy ornaments, started for the great city of the Kurus.†

But before starting he thus addressed the great warrior Satyaki:—"Make ready my chariot and

* *Kartica* is the latter end of October. *Revati* and *Maitra* are two terms in Hindu Astronomy.

† We need not say that we are quoting our ancient chronicler, the author of the Mahavarata. See Mahavarata, Udjoda Parva, Chaps. LXXXIII., to LXXXIX.

place on it my conch, my discus, my bow and arrows, and all sorts of offensive and defensive weapons. Durjodhana is wicked-minded, so are Karna and Sakuni. Even a weak enemy should not be made light of by a strong man.*

The car was got ready as directed. Satyaki ascended it, armed with all his weapons. Ten mighty warriors followed the prince, ready to lay down their lives to protect the life of their beloved Krishna. One thousand foot soldiers and one thousand horsemen went as rearguard and thousand others came behind with provisions and stores.

As he proceeded, his praises were recited by thousands of Brahmans. They offered him curd, honey, clarified butter and coins. Women came out and stood by the side of the road; and as Krishna passed, they threw on him sweetly scented wild flowers. The people and the inhabitants of Upapalavya came out of the city and stood

* All through this chapter we quote the author. Though our translation is free, yet we have rejected nothing important. Only unnecessary descriptions are dropped. This chapter will show what position Krishna held in the hearts of all classes of the people.

on the road. As Krishna passed by, they all worshipped him in great honour.*

Passing many beautiful villages and various cities and kingdoms, he at last arrived at a place called Vrikasthala. As he neared the village, he saw many great Rishis standing on the road. He immediately alighted from his chariot and paid them due respect. "O revered Sires," said he, "does everything go on well in the world? Is piety established everywhere? What is the object of your coming here? Where are you going? What service can I render to you?"

The Rishis replied that they had come to see him and adore him. They would go to the Kuru court to hear the words of wisdom that he would speak in that magnificent assembly of kings.† Krishna took leave of the great Rishis in all humility and then entered the village of Vrikasthala.

* This is a nice and very true picture of the state of a Aryan society when Krishna was born. Our readers must remember that they took place three thousand five hundred years ago when all the world was steeped in ignorance.

† Our readers should mark that though Krishna did not follow the existing religion, yet he respected the feelings of others and performed all customary rites then extant. He explained this in the Gita. We shall deal with all this later on.

It was evening. Krishna got down from his chariot and asked Daruka to unyoke the horses; he then performed the customary purificatory rites and evening duties.* He said to Satyaki, "We must pass the night here."

Daruka took off the trappings of the horses, and after carefully tending them according to the

* This is the order that the old King issued with the hope that he would be able to win over the great Krishna to his side. Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva. Chap. LXXXVI. says :—

"O Vidura. Krishna has set out from Upapalavya. He will come here in the morning. I shall present him sixteen golden chariots, each drawn by excellent horses. I shall also present him eight magnificent elephants. I shall give him one hundred handsome young maid-servants and one hundred servants. I shall present him eighteen thousand soft blankets and also thousands of deer's skins brought from China. I shall present him this very bright gem that shines day and night. My sons and grandsons will go forward to receive the great Vrisni prince. Beautiful damsels, the best of dancing girls, will go out on foot to receive Krishna. All handsome girls that will go out to see him must go without their veils drawn. Let my subjects, men, women and children, all go out to see him. Let the city be decorated with flags and banners. Let the roads through which he will pass be well watered. The house of Dushasana is better than that of Durjodhana, let it be magnificently furnished for the reception of the great Krishna."

Science, set them free. The men soon set up a tent for Krishna and prepared suitable food and drink for him. The soldiers made arrangements to pass the night as they could. Innumerable canvas-sheds were made, fires were lit, and all necessary arrangements were made to encamp for the night.

But they had hardly any need to take so much trouble to shelter themselves; for king Dhritarashtra had built a magnificent pavilion at Vrikasthala for the reception of the great Krishna and his followers. But the Vrisni prince did not cast even a look at it; he encamped with his men on a plain outside the village.

Such pavilions were built at every stage of Krishna's journey from Vrikasthala to Hastinapur. The foolish but wicked old king thought of winning over Krishna by a flattering reception and by the present of immense wealth.

At last Krishna neared the great city of the Kurus. The younger Kuru princes went out of the city to receive him. Thousands of men, women and children, some on foot and some on various conveyances, stood on the road to get a glimpse of the man for whom whole India had

gone mad. The city was beautifully decorated for his reception ; flags and banners floated from every house-top ; conchs were blown and trumpets were sounded ; again and again rose from the crowd tremendous shout singing his name. As he came near by, people recited his praises by touching their heads on the ground. The chariot of Krishna could not advance on account of the pressure of thousands of his devotees who were madly eager to get a glimpse of his face.*

Slowly and with much difficulty did his chariot at last enter the magnificent court-yard of the palace of the mighty king of the Kurus. Thousands of conchs were again and again blown; they announced that the great Krishna had arrived at the court of the king Dhritarastra.

* This is a translation of Slokas 3-8, Chap. LXXXIX, Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata.

CHAPTER VIII

FIRST DAY IN HASTINAPUR

AFTER traversing through the magnificent apartments of the royal abode, Krishna at last approached the great Kuru king.* Dhritarastra with Bhishma, Drona and others rose from his seat to receive him. The old king offered him a beautiful golden seat ornamented with gems and jewels. And when Krishna took his seat, a cow, some honey and curds and water were, according to custom offered to him. Krishna in return did all due honours to the great Kuru king and to all other revered chiefs present there. He then passed sometime amongst the Kurus jesting with some and exchanging words of courtesy with others,—with each according to his relationship with him.

With the permission of the great king, he then left the palace and went to the house of Vidura, where the mother of the Pandavas, the saintly

* We are strictly following our ancient chronicler in our descriptions. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapters LXXXIX to XCIII.

Kunti, was living. Vidura, the best amongst the honest and the learned, honoured and worshipped him with the present of all auspicious and desirable offerings. He then accompanied Krishna to the room in which Kunti passed her days, weeping for her absent sons. Seeing Krishna coming towards her, she burst into tears. She could not withhold her pent-up feelings ; she wept and gave vent to bitter lamentations.* “O aunt,” said Krishna, “what woman is there in the world like you ? You are the wife of a hero and you are the mother of heroes ; you should patiently bear happiness and misery alike, as your sons are doing. Having brought sleep, laziness, anger, joy, hunger and thirst under their control, they are ever in the enjoyment of happiness. Those mighty heroes can never rest satisfied with little. Those that are really heroes prefer to enjoy extreme happiness or to undergo extreme misery. Those only that have not been able to bring their senses under control enjoy happiness in a middle course, which is a mine of misery. The real happiness is either to rule a

* This lamentation occupies eighty Slokas of Udyoga Parva, Chapter XC.

kingdom or to live in the forest.* Your sons and your daughter-in-law send their loving greetings to you. They are in perfect health and happiness. You will soon see, O aunt, your sons, with all their objects gained and with all their enemies killed, installed on the throne of their forefathers.† “You are the Saviour of the world,” said Kunti, “you are the great Lord ; everything depends on you. What you have said must come to pass.”‡

Krishna, then bidding adieu to her, went to the palace of the great Kuru prince, Durjodhana. He saw him seated with Dushasana, Karna, Sakuni and others on excellent seats ornamented with gems and covered with costly carpets. As soon as they saw him approach, they all rose from their

* We would ask our readers to mark these great words of Srikrishna.

† Krishna, it is apparent, was all along aware that war was inevitable. But he still came to Hastinapur to make a last attempt to bring about peace. He came because it was his duty to come, and because success and failure were the same to him. In the Gita, Chapter II, Sloka 48, he says:— “Casting off all attachments, considering success and failure the same, perform actions.”

‡ It is evident Bhishma, Vidura, Kunti and many others believed Srikrishna to be the Supreme Lord in the human form.

seats and did him all customary honours. When the great Vrisni prince took his seat, Durjodhana, after the usual exchange of courtesy, invited him to dinner. But Krishna courteously declined to accept the invitation. "For what reason," asked Durjodhana, "the eatables, drinks, garments and beds which have been provided for you, do you not accept? Devoted as you are to the good of both the parties in this impending struggle, you ought to treat them equally."

"O prince," replied Krishna, "those ambassadors only who have gained their objects can take their food from those to whom they come. After gratifying my wishes, you can entertain me with all my followers." "It is not befitting," said Durjodhana, "that you should behave in this unjust way. We have no enmity with you; we are friends and relatives; therefore whether your objects are gained or not, you should accept our invitation." "O great king," replied Krishna, "I never abandon *Dharma* from desire, or wrath, or hate, or from the aim of gaining my objects or for the sake of arguments, or from covetousness, or from any thing else. One can eat another's food when he is pleased with him, or one can do it

when he is in distress. O king, neither do you please me, nor am I in distress."

Krishna then paid visits to Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and others. They all offered to place at his disposal their houses and wealth ; but Krishna courteously declined their kind offers and came to the homely abode of the good Vidura whose invitation he accepted.*

When the dinner was over and Krishna was comfortably seated, Vidura with all due respects thus spoke to the great Vrisni prince. "O lord, you should not have come to Hastinapur. The wicked Durjodhana with his counsellor have determined not to part with even a single village. Your mission would be fruitless. I do not like your coming amongst the enemies."†

"O revered Sir," replied Krishna, "you have spoken as a greatly wise man should. Knowing

* In Udjoga Parva. Chapter XCI., Sloka 34, Krishna says :—"All these eatables are defiled by wickedness, and therefore I cannot take them. I can accept only those that have been provided by Vidura who was the poorest of the Kuru chiefs, But he was the best and the most pious and virtuous.

† Vidura's speech is a long one occupying thirty Slokas We give only the gist of it.

too well the wickedness of the sons of Dhritarastra, I have still come to Hastinapur, for he who will be able to liberate this earth, now trampled by horses, chariots and elephants,* from the clutches of Death will earn great religious merit. Again he who does not try his utmost to serve a friend, suffering under a calamity, is called to be a cruel man by the wise. A friend should turn back a friend even by seizing his hair when he is at the point of doing an improper act. With all sincerity shall I strive to bring about the good of the sons of Dhritarastra and Pandu,—indeed of the entire Aryan race. If Durjodhana do not listen to my words, I shall at least be satisfied with myself that I have done my duty.”†

* Krishna means the earth full of men ready to go to war and at one another's throat.

† Krishna's words all through the Udjoga Parva give a very fair idea of his great religion and ethics. They also tell us of what a lofty character he was.

CHAPTER IX

KRISHNA AND THE KURUS

THE ancient chronicler writes :—At break of day, many sweet-voiced bards and singers awakened Krishna with their melodious music. As soon as he rose from his bed, the sounds of conchs and cymbals filled the sky. Krishna then performed all the necessary rites of the morning. Having performed his ablution and repeated the usual odes to the God of Fire, he wore his ornaments and robes.*

At this time Durjodhana and Sakuni came to Krishna in order to escort him to the Kuru Court. They said, "O great Vrisni prince, king Dhritarashtra with his ministers and friends are waiting for you in the Court." Krishna welcomed them

* We quote the whole of this chapter from the original, — *i.e.* Sloka 4—50, Chapter XCIV., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata, —in order to show the popularity that Krishna possessed and the great honour in which he was held. If we carefully read the Puranas, we meet with clear evidences of his great popularity,—in fact whole India was mad after him.

in courteous words and said that he was ready to go.

Before he ascended his chariot, which Daruka had kept prepared at the door, he distributed gold, clothes, cattle and horses to the Bramhans. He then went round the fire and started for the Kuru Court surrounded by the Kurus and guarded by the Vrisnis. Vidura, Durjodhana and Sakuni followed him in another car. Satyaki, Kritavarma, as also other Vrisni warriors, followed behind,—some on elephants, some on horses, and others on chariots. Hundreds of mighty heroes went along surrounding the car of Krishna : thousands others, holding up their swords, lances and maces, followed him, shouting his praises as they proceeded. Five hundred elephants and one thousand chariots came as the rear-guard of this grand procession. The great Vrisni prince having set out, there arose one continuous music of cymbals. Thousands of conchs and other musical instruments were played on all over the city.

Men, women, and children, the old and the young, had all assembled on the way by which Krishna would pass. The houses on the road-side

were tottering under the load of women who had assembled on the terraces and balconies. Krishna could hardly pass through the masses of men who pressed eagerly to his car to get a glimpse of his ever-loving countenance. He slowly proceeded along, receiving loving greetings from all sides and giving suitable replies to them all.

At last he reached the gate of the Assembly-Hall, and his followers filled every direction with the sounds of conchs and cymbals. That assembly of thousands of kings shook with delight at the prospect of seeing the greatest of great men, the ever famous Srikrishna. They all rose up in eagerness ; and there were confusions and uproars on all sides.

Krishna, having got down from his excellent chariot, entered the hall ; Vidura was on his one side and Satyaki on the other. In front of Krishna welcoming him, went Durjodhana and Karna ; behind him came Kritavarma and other Vrisni heroes. As soon as he came in sight, the king Dhritarastra with Bhishma, Drona, and all others rose up from their seats. Every one present rose to pay respects to the great Vrisni prince. He too greeted all present according to their respective

age and position. With a smiling face he then took the seat which was offered to him by the great Kuru king. When he was seated, all the other kings sat down on their respective seats. Durjodhana offered an excellent seat to Satyaki, so did his younger brother to Kritavarma. Near Krishna sat Karna and Durjodhana, and not far from them sat Sakuni, the prince of Gandhara. The good Vidura sat behind Krishna on a holy seat covered with the skin of a white deer. When all sat in their respective places and silence was restored, Krishna rose from his seat and thus addressed the old blind king.

CHAPTER X

KRISHNA'S SPEECHES

"I HAVE come, O great king, so that there may be peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas.* This dynasty of yours is the best among all the royal races of *Aryavarta*. It is noted for its knowledge of the *Sastras*, as also for its good ways of life. Kindness, pain at the sight of other's distress, desire to remedy evils, humanity, sincerity forgiveness and truth are specially prominent in the nature of the Kurus. Belonging to such a noble race, no one should do what is improper. An improper act is especially to be deplored when you are its cause. Your sons are acting impiously, setting aside all considerations of morality and goodness. This impending great disaster has its rise among the Kurus ; if not averted, it will destroy

* We quote in this chapter two speeches of Krishna,--we give a free translation. They are very long in the original, the first occupying 62 Slokas, Chap. CXV., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata, and the second occupying 55 Slokas, Chap. CXXXIV., Udjoga Parva.

the whole earth. If you desire, you can easily avert it. Peace is not impossible to secure. Peace depends on you as well as on me. Set right your sons, and I shall set the Pandavas right. Your command should be followed by your sons. It will be to their great good to act according to your orders. It will be your good as well as that of the Pandavas if you establish peace. Let the Pandavas be your allies. United with them, you will be invincible on earth ; the lordship of the entire world will be yours. In case of a war, you will be the cause of a great massacre. It will be a loss to both the parties ; it will not at all be a meritorious act for you.

What feelings will you experience if the Pandavas are killed or your own sons ? Your mighty sons and the ever invincible sons of Pandu are desirous of war,—O great king, save them all from this great calamity. All the kings of the Aryan race have assembled ; they would destroy one another and the earth will be flooded with their blood,—nay the world will be destroyed ; do not be the cause of the destruction of the human race. Let all these kings with their armies, having dined and drunk together in a spirit of peace, go back to their respective kingdoms.

Let the feelings of affection that you had for the Pandavas return to you. Let them be your sons as they really are. In their boyhood they lost their father ; it was you who reared and brought them up. Treat them with justice as you would do to your sons. Let not your sense of virtue be lost ; let them have their just dues.

Judhisthira always follows the path of virtue. Though badly treated, yet he remained under your protection and never disregarded you. Even when the blameless princess of Panchala were dragged into the Court, he did not deviate from the duty of a Kshatriya. He is still as great an embodiment of patience and forgiveness as ever. Give him his due share of his ancestral kingdom ; restrain your sons, and enjoy the blessings of life by rescuing the world from a great calamity. The sons of Kunti await your command to serve you and to fight for you,—O great king, control your wrath and be peaceful.”*

* Between Chapters CXV., and CXNIV., there are no less than 28 chapters. They contain long lectures of various Rishis and Bhishma and other Kuru chiefs to Dhritarastra and Durjodhana. As they have nothing to do with the career of Krishna, we do ~~not~~ quote them.

not

"O Krishna," replied the old king, "you have said to me what leads men to heaven, what is virtuous and just and what is beneficial to the world. But I am not my own master. Try to persuade my son, Durjodhana ; he never does what is pleasing to me ; he never listens to good words."

Krishna turned towards the Kuru prince and thus addressed him, "O friend, born as you are of a family of wise men, it is indeed proper that you should never do an improper act. Those that are low-born become weak-minded, inhuman and shameless. What you contemplate doing is done by such men only. The inclinations of honest men always tend towards virtue. Your obstinacy in this case is frightful, cruel and wicked ; it will cause a great massacre of human beings. It is thoroughly unworthy of you. O great prince, abandoning what is injurious to yourself, you should do what is beneficial to you, to your relatives and friends. Make peace with the Pandavas, who are heroic, wise, virtuous and learned. It would be pleasing and beneficial to your father, the great king Dhritarastra, as also to your grandfather Bhishma, to the revered Drona, to Vidura and to all other Kuru chiefs. My dear friend, in

peace will be your good, as well as of the entire world. You are born of a great family,—be modest, humane and wise. That man, who, having received good advices from his friends, does not act according to them is sure to perish at the end. He who, out of folly, does not act according to such advices, than which nothing is more beneficial, does not gain his object, and his afterwards stung with remorse. He who, abandoning his good advisers, acts according to the advices of evil ones, meets with great dangers. What man, perhaps except you, will abandon his own kinsmen, his beloved cousins, who are great warriors, and will expect benefits from others who are strangers? Ever since their birth the Pandavas have been persecuted by you, but they are never revengeful towards you. You should, O great prince, treat them in the same spirit. Do not show anger towards your own kinsmen, your own kith and kin. Peace with the Pandavas is more to your interest than with others. Living in peace with them, you will gain all your objects.

None of the great Kuru warriors is able to stand before Arjuna in battle. Do you see any man in your army who is able to fight with

that great Pandu prince ? Show me the man who will defeat the hero whose death only means your victory. It would be wanton massacre of millions of men. What advantage would that be to you ?

Look at your sons, at your brothers, at your kinsmen and other relatives. Let them not all be destroyed by your act. Let not this race of the Kurus be exterminated. Let not people say that you are the destroyer of your race.

I tell you, O great prince, those mighty warriors, the Pandavas, will establish you as the viceroy and your father, king Dhritarastra, as the emperor. Do not, therefore, throw away the great prosperity that is about to come to you."

CHAPTER XI

DURJODHANA AND KRISHNA

“It is proper,” said Durjodhana, “that you should speak to me in the way you do after proper consideration. You find fault with me in particular. Why do you praise the Pandavas and why do you always find fault with me without taking into your consideration the weakness and the strength of our cause? You, Vidura, the king, the preceptor, the grand-father,—all find fault with me and not with any one else. But I do not find that I am guilty of any unworthy conduct. I have not committed the slightest fault, nor do I find, after a most minute and searching examination, that I have done any wrong.

The Pandavas were defeated at a game of dice in which they engaged at their own accord. They lost their kingdom to Sakuni,—what fault of mine there could be in this matter? As a matter of fact I ordered the return of the wealth that the Pandavas lost. It is not my fault that they played again and stipulated to go to exile. What injury then

have we done to them that they, united with our hereditary enemies, the Panchalas, attempt to kill us and rob our kingdom ? We will not bow down our head out of fear even to Indra (celestial king).

If I fall fighting, I shall go to heaven. The principal duty of ours, the warriors, is to lie down on a bed of arrows on the field of battle. If we fall like heroes in battle without bowing our heads to the enemy, there would be nothing to be regretted. The share of the kingdom that was most wrongly given to them when I was a child will not be again given to the Pandavas, so long I am alive. So long this kingdom is held by me, I shall not give the Pandavas even so much land as is covered by the point of a needle."

Saying this, Durjodhana, breathing like a serpent, got up from his seat and left the assembly. His brothers, headed by Dushasana, and his allies and friends, headed by Karna and Sakuni, also rose from their seats. Forgetting all rules of etiquette they all left the great Kuru king.

"I find," said Krishna, "a great defect in the Kuru chiefs. They ought to stop this wicked prince by force. O great king, I consider that time has come for you to act. Imprison this foolish prince

and save the Aryan race from annihilation. Kansa usurped the throne of his father and became a great tyrant. His own relatives and friends abandoned him, and he was killed by me. Abandoning one of their number for the sake of the whole race, the Yadus and the Vrisnis attained to great happiness. Imprison Karna, Sakuni, Dushasana and Durjodhana. One man should be sacrificed for the good of a whole race ; a race should be sacrificed for the good of a town : a town should be sacrificed for the good of a community ; for the sake of one's own soul, even the whole world should be sacrificed. O great king, having imprisoned Durjodhana, make peace with the Pandavas. By your doing this, you will save the entire Kshatriya race from extermination."

The fond and foolish old king Dhritarastra could not and dared not accept the advice of Krishna. He made another weak attempt to induce his hot-headed son to give up the idea of battle. He summoned his queen Gandhari to the Court. He told her all that had happened and asked her to speak to her son. Vidura was sent to call upon Durjodhana to appear before the king and the queen. He came and sullenly sat down. His mother, with

tears in her eyes, entreated and implored him to save the Kuru race,—nay the whole earth from destruction ; but the proud prince turned a deaf ear to all her entreaties. Treating her words with contempt, he left the assembly without condescending to utter a word in reply.*

* All this covers three Chapters, CXXVI., to CXXIX, Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata. Gandhari's homily to Durjodhana covers 44 Slokas.

CHAPTER XII

PLOT AGAINST KRISHNA

WHEN Krishna was advising the Kuru king to imprison his wicked son and thus save the extermination of the Kshatriya race, Durjodhana was also consulting with his friends to capture him and to put him in prison. He said to Karna, Sakuni and Dushasana, "Krishna wants to capture us in consultation with my old father, but let us capture him before he can induce the king to do it. If we can keep him imprisoned here, the Pandavas and the Panchalas will lose heart, they would perhaps give up the idea of battle;—if not, without Krishna they are sure to meet with defeat at our hands."

This infamous plot, the most unworthy of its kind, became known to Satyaki. He immediately said to Kritavarma, "Quickly prepare our army for action and wait with it at the door of the Council-Hall." He then came to Krishna and communicated

to him the intention of the Kuru prince. At the direction of Krishna he then communicated it to the old king and to all the Kuru chiefs present in the court. All were struck dumb with astonishment, fear and shame. The idea of capturing an ambassador,—nay a guest, was more than what the Aryans of that age could think of. Again the idea of capturing Krishna, the Idol and the God of all India, was more than fearful ;—all cast down their heads and remained silent.

Then did Krishna slowly rise from his seat. “O king,” said he, “if through malice they can capture me by their might, let them do it. I know their prowess, and I can cure them of all their anger at this moment. But I shall never do an act which is blamable and sinful. Your sons will lose their own wealth by coveting the wealth of the Pandavas. By their wishing to capture me, they are making Judhisthira’s chances of success more certain. Will it be very bad if I capture them to-day with all their followers, and hand them over to the Pandavas ? But I am not inclined to do such a blamable deed which will be the result of my anger, therefore sinful. O king, let Durjodhana do what he wishes. I give him permission to do it.”

"Bring immediately," cried the old blind king, "that wicked prince with his friends, his ministers, his brothers and with all his followers."

Vidura again went to Durjodhana and brought him before the king. "You are cruel, mean and sinful," said Dhritarastra, "United with wicked men, you want to perpetrate the most wicked deed. It is infamous and scandalous. You intend to capture Krishna who is impossible of being captured by any living beings !"

"O Durjodhana," said Krishna, "thinking me weak and alone, you intend to effect my capture by force,—it is because you have very little intelligence." Saying this Krishna laughed aloud. Then taking Satyaki and Kritavarma by hand, he left the Kuru court

Dhritarastra, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Vidura and others followed him to the gate. "O Krishna" said the blind king. ' you have seen that I have no influence over my sons. You have seen every thing ; nothing has been done behind your back. I have not any wicked intentions against the Pandavas."

Addressing all, Krishna then said, "Your exalted selves were witnesses to all that had transpired.

in the court. You have heard the king says that he has no influence over his sons. With your permission, therefore, I shall now go back to Upapalavya."

He bade adieu to them all and went to take leave of Kunti, the revered mother of the Pandavas. He then started for the Pandava camp. But on meeting Karna on his way, he took him up on his chariot.*

* After the speech of Krishna to Durjodhana, Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap CXXXI., Slokas 4—15 say that he then showed his "Universal Form" to the old king and to the entire Kuru Court. This means that in his human form he showed the form of the Supreme Lord of the universe. This wonderful incident is also mentioned in the Gita in the Bhishma Parva. There again Krishna showed it to Arjuna. We shall deal with it later on when we shall come to the Gita.

But we must mention here why we have rejected this incident in this place. In the 11th chapter of the Gita, Krishna says, "Except you none as ever before seen this (my Universal Form)." And again in another place he says, "Except you none has by asceticism, the study of the Vedas, and the performances of sacrifices been able to see my this form." Under the circumstances we believe we are justified to say that in the Kuru Court his manifestation of his Supreme Form is but an after-addition.

See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CXXX to CXXXI.

CHAPTER XIII

KRISHNA AND KARNA

KRISHNA made another attempt to prevent this war and this great massacre of men.* Karna was the main strength of Durjodhana ; in fact depending on his matchless prowess, the proud and ambitious Kuru prince dared to pick a quarrel with the Pandavas. If he were not by him, Durjodhana would never have dared to fight with the Pandavas. He was fully aware that he had not the least chance of success, if Karna were not in his army.

The beautiful and prosperous Aryan land was on the point of destruction ; millions of men who loved him with all their hearts were almost in the clutches of death ; innumerable women who were his loving devotees were going to fill the earth with their heart-rending lamentations ; the world

* We must mention that there are no less than eight chapters between Chap. CXXXI. in which Krishna's departure from the Kuru court has been narrated and Chap. CXL. in which Krishna addresses Karna. These eight chapters contain a long story told by Kunti to Krishna. It is evidently an interpolation.

is going to be flooded with the human blood ; Krishna, the great and the good, made a last attempt to avert this great calamity. He took up Karna on his chariot* and spoke to him thus :—
 “Do you know, O Karna, who you are ? You are not the son of Athiratha and Radha ; you are the eldest son of Kunti. You were born before she was married to Pandu. The holy writs say that such sons are called *Kanins*, and they have for their father the man whom their mother marries. You are, therefore, morally the son of Pandu.† Let the Pandavas know it, and they will accept your feet. You being the eldest, they will joyously instal you on the throne. The kings and princes, assembled at Upapalavya, will all follow you. I shall follow you with all the Bhojas and Vrisnis. Enjoy the kingdom with your loving and good younger brothers. Let your friends rejoice, and let there be brotherly feelings between you and the Pandavas.”‡

* This incident shows what a great diplomat Krishna was. If he could have induced Karna to join the Pandavas, it was certain Durjodhana would not have dared to fight.

† See our Note in p. 112.

‡ See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CXI., Slokas 6-29.

“O Krishna,” replied Karna, “you have undoubtedly spoken these words out of good will, love and friendship. I know that according to the holy writ I am the eldest son of Pandu. I know that I was born of Kunti before her marriage. But she abandoned me and never thought of me. Athiratha and Radha on the other hand reared and brought me up with all affection. They have done everything for me ; they are, therefore, my parent. How can I now forsake them ? I have married wives in the caste of Athiratha ; I have sons and grandsons born of them. O Krishna, not for the kingship of this entire earth, nor for heaps of gold, nor for pleasure, nor owing to any fear, I can break off these ties.”

“Again, I have enjoyed sovereignty for many years under the protection of Durjodhana. Having got me on his side, he has made this preparation for war ; from the fear of being killed, or from the fear of being captured, or from covetousness, or from any thing else, I cannot behave treacherously to the son of Dhritarastra. Doubtless, O Krishna, you are speaking for my good ; the Pandavas also will obey your command ; but I ask you to keep this conversation secret. I know, if the virtuous-minded

and self-controlled Yudhisthira knows me to be the eldest son of Kunti, he will never agree to accept the kingdom ; and I too, if I get it, will offer it to Durjodhana. It is ordained that the Aryan race will be annihilated on the field of Kurukshetra. The Brahmans will hereafter tell the world of the great battle of Mahavarata. Therefore, O Krishna, manage things in such a way that by falling on the field of battle we may go to heaven.”*

“You desire not then” said Krishna, “to gain this kingdom ! The sure success of the Pandavas will then follow,—there is no doubt about it. Go then, O Karna, and tell the Kuru chiefs that this month is a charming one with plenty of food, drink and fuel. All plants and herbs are luxuriant in their growth ; the trees are laden with fruits, the ponds are free from mud, and their water is pleasant to drink. It is neither hot nor cold. In seven day’s time there will be full moon ; on that day let us engage in battle.”

“Knowing every thing,” said Karna, “why do

* Karna’s speech is a long one, occupying 57 Slokas of Chapter CXII., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata.

you wish to confound me and lead me to folly? You know that the destruction of the world is near at hand."

"This world," replied Krishna, "will surely come to an end since my words do not seem to be acceptable to you." "If I am alive," said Karna, "I shall see you after this great battle. If I die, we shall meet in heaven."*

Having said this, Karna most affectionately embraced Krishna. He then got down from his chariot and went back to Hastinapur. Krishna retraced his steps towards the Pandava camp.†

* See Mahavarata. Udjoga Parva, CXLII to CXLIII.

† Our readers might say if Krishna was really eager to prevent this war, he could have easily done it by asking the Pandavas to retire. They would never have disobeyed him. Well, if he did this, it would have been giving premium to vice and sin and indulgence to wickedness. It would have been murdering justice and virtue in the world. He tried all possible means to induce Durjodhana to walk in the path of virtue and to give the just dues to the Pandavas. His attempt to bring in peace amongst the Pandavas and the Kurus is the highest example of establishing righteousness in the world by preaching, diplomacy, statesmanship and learning. But when all this failed, as it has always failed on earth, he took another course to establish the Kingdom of Righteousness in the world. It is by removing the wicked and the sinful by death. This is the grandest aspect of his character and teachings. Thus the great battle of Kurukshetra came to be fought.

CHAPTER XIV

MARCH TO KURUKSHETRA

On the return of Krishna, the Pandava king Yudhisthira ordered his army to march to the field of Kurukshetra.* All hope of a peaceful settlement was gone;—it was now annihilation of the Pandavas or their sovereignty of the entire world,—it was now a struggle for life and death,—a most sanguinary battle to be fought to the bitterst end.

Under the advice of Krishna the great army of the Pandava king was divided into seven divisions under seven illustrious generals, namely Drupada, Birata, Dhristadyumna, Shikhandi,† Satyaki, Chikitana,‡ and Bhima. The invincible Panchala

* After the departure of Krishna, there are six chapters in the Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata. It narrates the meeting of Karna with Kunti. She introduces herself as his mother and makes the same request as did Krishna. Her requests were also courteously declined by Karna.

Then follows a long narration by Krishna of what he did and saw in Hastinapur. We believe all these are but after-additions.

† Shikhandi and Dhristadyumna were the two sons of king Drupada.

‡ Chikitana was a great warrior.

prince Dhristadyumna was made the generalissimo, the Pandava Bhima became second in command. The king left the Panchala princess Draupadi and the other ladies, and also the servants and maid-servants, at Upapalavya. Every arrangement was made to guard over them. A strong wall was erected round the village and soldiers were placed at regular intervals.

The ancient chronicler then goes on to say :— There arose a great commotion among the soldiers, the leaders shouting on all sides "Draw up." There rose everywhere the roars of elephants, the neighings of horses and the clatters of the chariot wheels. There rose everywhere piercing notes of conchs and loud sounds of drums. The tremendous noise caused by the marching of the great army was like that of the sea in a tempest. In front of the army drove in their respective chariots the great Panchala prince Dhristadyumna, the mighty hero Bhimasena, the young warrior Abhimanyu and the five heroic sons of Draupadi.* They were

* It is said that Draupadi had five sons by her five husbands. They were named, Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Srutakarmana, Satanika and Srutasena. All these princes were at this time grown-up young men.

followed by thousands of cheerful soldiers, clad in brilliant coats of armour. Infantry, cavalry, elephant-men and car-warriors followed in succession,—every one in his proper place; every countenance beamed with the determination to win the battle or to die on the field.

In the middle of the army was the king Judhisthira with the treasury, with the transport carts and other vehicles and conveyances, with the armoury of weapons, with the physicians and surgeons, and those that were invalid.

The king proceeded distributing curds and gold. The Brahmans went with him singing his praises. The great potentates and mighty car-warriors marched all around him. Every one of them was determined to place him on the throne of his ancestors or to die in the attempt.

In the rear of the army were Birata and other great generals with forty thousand chariots, five times that number of horses, ten times that number of foot-soldiers and sixty thousand elephants.

Marching in this order, the great Pandava army reached the field of Kurukshetra. In a part of the field which was level and shady and where there was plenty of fodder and fuel, the king ordered

his army to encamp. Avoiding cremation-grounds, sacred places, and houses, the hermitages of the Rishis and all other holy spots, the army encamped on an open part of the field which was delightful and grassy. They encamped on the bank of a lake called Hiranavati. The two great generals, Dhristadyumna and Satyaki, then measured the land of encampment and threw entrenchments all around it. Innumerable tents and canvas-sheds were then set up; thousands of them were filled with eatables, drinks, fuels, bow-strings, bows, armours, various weapons, honey, clarified butter, water, powdered lac &c.

The great army was furnished with all the requisites of war, namely with the materials for repairs of chariots, with quivers to be carried on chariots, with tiger-skins to cover the chariots, with long sticks to be made spear-handles, with clubs and maces, with arrow-heads, with flags and banners, with arrows, bows and bow-strings, with various sorts of ropes and nooses, with oil and molasses, with pots full of poisonous snakes, with barbed weapons, with skins furnished with bills, with syringes for throwing hot liquids, with machines for scattering poisons, with various

devices for hurling javelins, with battle-axes, sharp spikes, iron-gloves, tiger and leopard-skins &c.*

With every arrangement thus complete, the great army of the Pandava king waited the approach of the Kurus. Seven *Akhauhinies* of men waited with mad eagerness to rush upon the eleven *Akhauhinies* with which the proud Kuru prince was coming to attack them. Durjodhana with his stupendous army had already left Hastinapur; he was marching in hot haste to meet his great enemy.

The ancient chronicler says:—Durjodhana divided his men, elephants, chariots and horses into three classes, superior, inferior and indifferent. He then distributed them in his army according to their merits. He appointed as charioteers men of good parentage, all masters in the use of arms and competent judges of horses. The chariots were all decorated with flags and banners and had on them every sort of drugs and weapons.

* To give our readers some idea of the war-arrangements of the ancient Aryans, we purposely quote this entire chapter from the Mahavarata. It is a translation of Slokas 49-62, Chapter CLI. and Slokas 1-12, Chapter CLII., and Slokas 3-9. Chapter CLV., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata.

They were each drawn by four horses adorned with bells and pearls. One charioteer held the rein, but four others walked at the sides of the horses. Each elephant of the Kuru army had on its back seven warriors,—two with bows and arrows, two with swords, and one with a lance and a trident. Each horseman was clad in shining armour and each held a flag in his hand. The infantry were clad in golden coats of mail and armed with various weapons. In the army of the great Kuru king, each car-warrior was supported by ten elephants, one hundred horse-men and one thousand foot-soldiers.*

Bhisma, Drona, Karna, Salya,† Kripa, Jayadhratha,‡ Karitavarma, Aswathama, Sakuni and many other great warriors had been given the command of the several divisions of the great Kuru army. The old patriarch of the Kurus, Bhisma himself, had been installed as the generalissimo of this stupendous mass of warriors.

* See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva. Chapter CLV.

† Salya was the king of Madra. He was the maternal uncle of the Pandavas.

‡ Jayadhratha was the king of Sindhu. He married the sister of Durjodhana.

When appealed to by Durjodhana, he said, " Yes, I shall fight on your behalf ; because I am bound by my vow to do it."* But Karna had also vowed that he would never fight so long Bhishma was alive, for he was too proud to take the help of even great Bhishma to exterminate the Pandavas and the Panchalas.† Thus Fortune favoured the Pandavas. It was a great split in the Kuru army, and it materially weakened its strength. The great Bhishma and Karna fighting side by side would have been too much even for the ever-invincible Arjuna.

Thus arrayed, the great Kuru army encamped in front of the Panchalas and their allies on the extensive field of Kurukshetra. Above horses, elephants and chariots, above tents and canvas-sheds, above moulds and entrenchments, floated the proud banner of the proud prince of Hastinapur.

* See Udjoga Parva, Chapter CLVI, Sloka 17. When Bhishma vowed for his father's sake that he would never marry, so that Satyawati's son and grand-sons might always ascend the throne, he also promised to his step-mother Satyawati that he would never leave her sons and grand-sons, but would always protect them and fight for them. See page 110, and Mahavarata, Adi Parva.

† Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CLVI., Sloka 25.

Thus did millions of men stand on the field of Kurukshetra, madly eager to fall upon one another and cut one another's throat. Thus did the Aryan heroes, the best of the human race, stand to flood the earth with their hot crimson blood.*

* We here take leave of the Udjoga Parva, though still there are forty-three chapters more. These chapters contain nothing important in respect to the career of Krishna. In Chapters CLVI. and CLVII. are narrated the arrangements of the army of the Kurus, Bhishma's appointment as the generalissimo, Karna's vow not to fight so long Bhishma was alive and so forth.

In Chapter CLVIII., Rukmi comes to the Pandavas and offers his services, but the offer is courteously declined. He then goes to the Kurus who also refuse to accept it. Rukmi goes back in great anger. We must say Rukmi was Krishna's brother-in-law. This story on the face of it is an interpolation.

From chapter CLIX., to Chapter CLXIII., is the narration of Ulaka's embassy. Ulaka was one of the brothers of Durjodhana, sent, it appears, only to abuse the Pandavas and Krishna.

From Chapter CLXV., to Chapter CLXXII., is the description of the various warriors of the contending armies given by Bhishma. The rest of the Udjoga Parva contains the story of Amva, also narrated by Bhishma.

CHAPTER XV

THE PANDAVAS BEFORE THE BATTLE

THE two armies stood facing each other on the field of Kurukshetra. The Kurus roared and foamed to fall upon the Panchalas ; they too were with difficulty restrained by their great generals. Both the contending parties were impatiently waiting for the day of the full-moon, which was thought auspicious to begin this great battle.

But the Pandavas were not happy. It was most painful to them to kill their own kith and kin, to exterminate their own race, to slay their own cousins, their own preceptor, uncle and grandfather. The good king Judhisthira thus spoke, "The great calamity,—to avert which I went into exile and suffered so much misery,—that very calamity,—has overtaken us. How should we fight with those who should not be slain ? How can we expect victory by killing men, who are our respected elders, our beloved kinsmen, our revered superiors !"*

* See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva.]

Such was the painful feelings that weighed heavily upon the hearts of the Pandu princes. Seven *Akhauhinies* of warriors stood ready to lay down their lives for their sake, but they were eager to exterminate those whose blood ran through their own veins. They were the only five Kurus in their own great army ! With aliens and strangers they were going to butcher their own kith and kin ! What could be more painful to them ? But there was no alternative ; they must fight.

When the two armies were thus impatiently waiting to attack each other, Arjuna one day thus spoke to Krishna.*. "O friend, place my car between the two armies. I shall see those who stand here with the desire of battle. I shall see those with whom I shall have to fight in this war. I shall see those who have assembled here to fight with the desire to do good to the evil-minded sons of our uncle, king Dhritarastra."

As requested, Krishna took the chariot out of

* With this begins the celebrated Gita. This speech and subsequent matters are translations of Sloaks 21-38. and 44 to 45 of Chapter I., the Gita. We need not say the Gita is a section of the Bhishma Parva. Mahavarata.

the encampment and placed it in front of the great army of the Kurus. The mighty Pandu prince looked in front ; he looked behind ; he saw the great army of Durjodhana, he saw also the stupendous army of Judhisthira. He saw present in the two armies fathers, grand-fathers, preceptors, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grand-sons, friends, fathers-in-law, relatives, kinsmen and well-wishers. All these dearest and nearest of friends and relatives would lie on that field of battle ! The thought overcame him. He spoke thus with great despondency to his friend and guide.

“Seeing, O Krishna, all these kinsmen present here with the desire of battle, my limbs have grown languid, my mouth is dried up, my body trembles, my hairs stand on end, my bow slips from my hand, my skin burns, I am unable to stand ; my mind is whirling. O Krishna, I see evil omens on all sides. I do not see any good in killing kinsmen. O Krishna, I desire neither victory, nor sovereignty, nor pleasures. What is sovereignty, what is enjoyment, what is even life, when those for whose sake we wish to have sovereignty, enjoyment, and pleasures in this world, are all present here in this battle giving up all hopes of life and wealth ! I

see before me preceptors, fathers, grand-fathers and sons, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grand-sons, brothers-in-law and relatives ; O Krishna, I do not desire to kill them even if they kill me ! I do not desire to do it, even for the sake of the sovereignty of the three worlds, much less for that of this earth ! What pleasures shall we derive from killing our own cousins, the sons of Dhritarastra ! Even killing these wicked men, we shall incur sin. It is not proper that we should kill our kinsmen. How can we be happy by killing our relatives ? Blinded by avarice if they cannot see the sin they commit by exterminating the Kuru race, why should we not,—we who know what sin accrues from exterminating one's own race,—learn to desist from it ? Alas, we are engaged in committing a great sin ! We are prepared to kill our own kinsmen from the greed of enjoying the pleasures of sovereignty ! Better would it be if unretaliating and unarmed Arjuna is killed by the armed sons of Dhritarastra !”

Having said this, Arjuna with a sorrowful heart sat down on the car.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT CRISIS

To him then Krishna spoke thus, "Whence, O Arjuna, has come upon you in this great crisis such a delusion,—a delusion unworthy of an *Arya*—a delusion which is irreligious and a source of infamy ? Be not effeminate, O Arjuna ; it does not suit you. Arise, shake off this mean weakness of heart."

"O friend, O Krishna," said Arjuna, "how shall I attack in this battle our revered grand-father Bhishma, and our most beloved preceptor Drona ! It is better for one to live on alms than to kill such men ! We do not know which of the two is better for us,—to vanquish or to be vanquished. I am confounded about my duty. I ask you, tell me what is assuredly good for me. I am your disciple, instruct me ; I am at your disposal. Even if I get the undisputed sovereignty over the most prosperous kingdoms of the world or that over the celestials, O Krishna, I do not see that which can remove the great pain that I shall feel in killing my most beloved kinsmen."

Having said this, Arjuna cast aside his bow and arrows. Saying, "No, I shall not fight," he remained silent. To him thus spoke Krishna smiling, "You grieve for those that deserve no grief; at the same time you speak words of wisdom!" He then went on speaking things that had never before, nor has since then, been spoken in the world. It was a great crisis; the most momentous moment had at last arrived; and Krishna delivered his Great Teachings.*

If Arjuna would withdraw from the fight, the Pandavas would have no chance of success, for there was none in their army who could defeat the great Karna. With the defeat and the death of the Pandavas, virtue, justice and piety,—nay all that was good and heavenly on earth, would for ever be done away with. Sin, injustice and wickedness,—nay all that was bad and hellish on earth would flourish; therefore it was time, it was absolutely necessary, for Krishna to enunciate his Great Religion, to turn the mind of Arjuna to higher strata of thought and morals, to convert

* Then Krishna went on to deliver his grand teachings which are known by the name of the Vagavata Gita or the Divine Song.

him to his inconceivable modes of thinking, to raise his mind so high as to make it feel no pain in performing the most painful duties, to lead his soul to that Blissful Land where there is Eternal Ecstasy.

Millions of men were ready to cut one another's throats, but it was a battle between the good and the bad. It was a question whether sin or virtue should be victorious on earth, whether the Kingdom of Righteousness would be extended in this world, or whether this earth would be given over to the reign of sin and vice. All now depended on Arjuna, the prince of Pandu ; but his mind was full of misgivings,—he did not know what to do. It was time, therefore, for the ever-merciful Father of the Universe to show that His earth and His men and women were intended for virtue and goodness, and not for vice and wickedness.*

On the holy field of Kurukshetra, amidst the

* In the Gita, Chapter IV., Slokas 7-8. Krishna said, "Whensoever virtue languishes and sin predominates, I create myself. I take my birth age after age for the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of piety."

roars of elephants, the neighings of horses, the rattles of the chariot-wheels and the fearful shouts of millions of warriors mad to taste human blood, the great Krishna poured on Arjuna the Ambrosia of his Great Teachings, the grandest that were given to man. In the midst of war and bloodshed, he raised his finger and pointed to mankind the way to the Land of Ever-lasting Bliss. Making Arjuna an instrument, he thus established the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth.

Buddha said that many Buddhas had already been born and many more would be born to establish the Kingdom of the Righteousness on earth

The Bible says the day of judgment would come, Jesus would reappear, the sinful and wicked would be punished and the virtuous would be rewarded.

CHAPTER XVII

DEITY AND DUTY

“YOU grieve,”* said Krishna, “for those that deserve no grief ; and at the same time you utter words of wisdom. But a man of knowledge do not grieve for the living or for the dead. Neither I, nor you, nor these kings were ever non-existent, and again none of us will ever cease hereafter to exist.

* As the life and career of Srikrishna have been written by various men in various ways, as he has been painted as each believed him to be, so has the celebrated Gita, his great teachings, been written and commented upon as each thought its true meanings to be. As Krishna has been used by the great founders of the various Hindu sects to popularise their own particular views and doctrines, so has the ever famous Gita been used by them to spread their own religions. Thus have innumerable commentaries, notes, keys, criticisms and essays on the Gita been written in Sanskrit and in the various languages of India. Great Sankara wrote a commentary on the Gita, so did Ananda Giri, so did Sridhara Swami, so did many others ; but all attempted to popularise their own peculiar sects, doctrines and philosophies with the help of this most wonderful book. Thus has Gita been made the Great Book of all sorts of religions and religious sects that exist in India. Thus has it become the great Store-house

As childhood, youth and old age are but changes in the body of men, so death is but a change. A man of knowledge is never deluded by it.*

The contract of senses with the internal objects which produces cold and heat, pleasure and pain, are not permanent, because they have beginnings

of all Aryan thoughts. It has become impossible, therefore, now to make every one take the same view of this most wonderful book of the world.

But our course is clear. Our readers must remember that we are writing a history and not any treatise on religion. Nor do we pretend to show any great scholarship and study by quoting the opinions of various great men who have commented upon this famous work. We shall, therefore, stick only to what Gita says, without taking into our consideration what others say or said about it. We shall quote the Gita, making our quotation as literal translations as possible. We shall give the simplest, the plainest and the most ordinary meanings of its wonderful words. But we must earnestly ask our readers to read a complete Gita, if not in the original, at least in a good translation.

* We must here mention that Gita is an episode in the Mahavarata. It begins from chapter XXV., Bhishma Parva and ends in chapter XLII. It is spoken by Sanjaya to the old blind king Dhritarastra, when he asked what took place on the field of Kurukshetra when his sons and the Pandavas had encamped. Sanjaya was blessed with the power of omniscience; through this power he came to know what conversations took place between Krishna and Arjuna, although he never heard it with his own ears.

and ends. Therefore,* O Arjuna, you must bear them.† The man who is learned in the true

* He explains this more elaborately later on.

† We do not believe, and no one can believe, that the Gita, as it now exists, was *de facto* recited by Krishna before Arjuna. It would be unnatural for obvious reasons. Do people talk in verse? Was there the art of phonography known then? Even Sanjaya came to know of it through some supernatural power; he never personally heard it recited. It is nowhere mentioned in the Mahavarata that the Rishi Vyasa was present when Krishna told it to Arjuna, or when Sanjaya recited it to the king. Thus we can by no means trace the Gita, *as it now exists*, to Krishna. It has also been clearly proved by many great oriental scholars (see Talang's Introduction to Gita in the Sacred Book of the East.) that the present Gita is *an* work written many years subsequent to the time when the *original* Mahavarata was written.

But by whomsoever written, it was written based on the teachings of Srikrishna. It could not be otherwise. We must state our reasons.

Firstly :—At the outset we say, Krishna really delivered a lecture to the Pandavas just before the great battle, and Vyasa must have briefly mentioned it in the original Mahavarata he wrote. The reason, why we say that Vyasa wrote a brief account of Srikrishna's teachings, the elaborate development of which is Gita as it now stands, is that it is quite *natural* that Arjuna and the Pandavas should be filled with great despondency when they came face to face with their dearest friends and relatives whose death meant their victory. If there was a battle and that battle was really fought between the Pandavas and the Kurus as undisputedly

knowledge, whom the contact of senses cannot afflict, and to whom pain and pleasure are alike,

it was (see introduction), it *was* a fact also that the Pandavas were filled with great despondency, and that they thought it better for them to go back to exile than to kill their beloved uncle, grand-father, preceptor and others. It is impossible that the fact should be otherwise, for it would be then some thing unnatural,—something beyond the pale of natural law.

If then it was a fact that the Pandavas were filled with great despondency, it was also a fact that Krishna removed their despondency and induced them to fight. He must have told them something extraordinary, or else men like Arjuna Judhithira and others would not have agreed to kill their dearest kinsmen. If some extraordinary teachings were not given to the Pandavas by Krishna, the battle would never have been fought.

Such being the case, the great Vyasa, when describing the battle, must have mentioned Krishna's teachings in the Mahavarata that he originally wrote. A great writer like Vyasa could not leave such a gap in his work. In fact if the Gita is withdrawn from the Mahavarata, every thoughtful student will find that there would be a very great gap in the whole story. Without the Gita in the Mahavarata, all the great characters of the story fall to the ground; they appear to be painted in the darkest hue. It is an impossibility in such a writer as Vyasa. Therefore we say, Krishna delivered a lecture to the Pandavas, which lecture was briefly mentioned by Vyasa in the original Mahavarata. A subsequent great writer wrote the present wonderful Gita in verse based on this wonderful teachings.

Secondly :—(a) The teachings of the Gita are peculiar; they are novel and new, and they do not coincide with any

merits *Maksha* (Final Emancipation). There is no existence of that which is *asat*, and there is

other teachings in any other religious books of the Hindus. They have some speciality of their own. They stand alone in their grandeur in the midst of the various grand teachings with which the Hindu sacred books are replete. Such being the case, one is naturally led to ask who is the originator of these wonderful teachings? One is bound at the same time to say that they must belong to him alone with whose words they coincide. If our readers read the whole of the Hindu Sastras, they will find that the peculiar and novel teachings—the essence of the Gita,—coincide with none except with the words of Krishna as scattered all through the Mahavarata.

(b) It is evident from the meagre accounts that we get of Srikrishna in the Puranas and the Mahavarata that he founded and preached a new religion; but neither the Puranas nor the Mahavarata clearly say what it was. The little of his teachings that we meet with in the Puranas and the Mahavarata leads one to conclude that his religion could not but be that which has been told in the Gita.

(c) We have said that Krishna must have told something very extraordinary to induce the Pandavas to kill their dearest kinsmen. What could it be? If we explore the whole sea of the Sanskrit lore, we do not find any thing any where except what we find in this Gita which can make a man kill his dearest relatives when it is his *duty* to do it,—believing at the same time that he is performing a *virtuous* act.

(d) The Gita preaches a religion and pictures a man who is the result of such a religion. The Gita's model is a perfect man—a man greatest in everything and in every way,—a man who is the highest ideal of

no non-existence of that which is *sat*.* Those that are truly learned perceive the correct ends of both. Know that which pervades all this universe is indestructible ; none can destroy that imperishable Principle. The material body only (as that of a man) of that ever-lasting, indestructible, infinite but embodied Self is said to be perishable. Therefore, O Arjuna, engage in battle.”†

“He who thinks that it (the great Self in man) is the killer, and he who thinks that it is killed,

virtue and piety, knowledge and learning, might and prowess,—a man who has gone beyond the influence of his mind not to speak of his body,—a man who has become master over both Matter and Spirit,—a man whose self has disappeared in the Great Self, though he lives, moves and acts as a human being. Search the entire Sanskrit literature, nay all the literatures and histories of the world, and show us a man to the Gita’s model. But put Srikrishna before you and say with all impartiality whether he is not the only character found in history and literature which can be called the great Gita’s model. If this be the case, we must say Gita’s great words could not have been uttered by any one else except the greatest of all men, Srikrishna.

* *Sat* means that which exists ; *Asat* is its opposite state. Universe is the combination of *Sat* and *Asat*.

† Krishna means to say that death is *unreal*, and therefore it is virtually *nothing* ; then there is no harm in killing, for *killing* means also *nothing*, because it is *unreal*.

either of them knows nothing, for it neither kills nor is killed. It is never born, it never dies ; having existed, it does never become non-existent. It is unborn, ever-lasting, unchangeable and ancient. It is not killed, though its body is killed. How and whom can that man kill or cause to be killed who knows his great Self to be unborn, indestructible, ever-lasting, and imperishable ? As a man casts off his worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so does this embodied Self casts off old bodies and enters into new ones. Weapon does not cut this great Self ; fire does not burn it ; water does not moist it ; wind does not dry it. It is not to be cut, not to be burnt, not to be moistened and not to be dried up. It is ever-lasting, all-pervading, stable, firm, eternal, ever-continuing, not perceivable, inconceivable and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing it to be such, you ought not to grieve.*

* The most exulted preceptor, the great preacher and scholar Sankara says :—" This Gita is the summary of all the meanings of the Vedas. If the true meaning of this book is really and perfectly understood, *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (pleasure), and *Moksha* (salvation) are gained."

And again, if you think, O Arjuna, that this great Self constantly takes birth and constantly dies, even then you ought not thus to grieve ; for death is certain to one who is born, and birth is certain to one who is dead. Therefore you ought not to grieve for such unavoidable matters.

In the beginning, O Arjuna, all beings are unmanifest ; in the middle they are manifest, and at the end they are unmanifest again. What is there then to be sorry for ? One sees this phenomenon as a wonder ; others hear of it as a wonder, but even hearing of it, none can understand it.

This indestructible embodied Self, O Arjuna,

The *Gita Mahatman* says :—“ All the Upanishads are the cow ; Krishna, the cow-herd boy, is the milker ; Arjuna is the calf ; the Devotee is the drinker of the milk ; and the *Gita* is the milk of that cow.”

Such being the case, we do not pretend to say that we have been able to explain *Gita* in any way. We, as an humble historian, have dealt with facts and facts alone : and as facts we quote *Gita* as we find it without any commentary of our own. We do not give our view, or the view of any one else ; we give the *Gita* as it is. In our humble opinion the *Gita* is perfect in itself. One who is *really eager* to understand it, can do it without the help of any one else. We have explained the *Gita* by the *Gita* itself, for in our humble opinion the *Gita* is the best commentary of the *Gita*.

is in the body of every one.* Therefore you ought not to grieve for the death of any beings.†

And again, looking to your own duty pertaining to your own caste, you ought not to waver to fight. There is nothing better to a *Kshatriya*‡ than a righteous battle. Happy are those *Kshatriyas* who get such a battle to fight,—a battle that comes of itself, and which is the open gate to heaven.”§

* Krishna means that the great Deity is in every man. It is that Great Self, and none else, who appears in the world in an embodied form as man.

† The Gita, Chapter XV., slokas 7-11 say:—“An everlasting portion of me (God), becoming an individual Self in this world, draws to itself the five senses with the mind as the sixth. They all depend on Nature. When this Self, the King of the body, assumes or quits the body, it departs, taking them away as the fragrance. Presiding over the ear, the eye, the organs of touch, taste and smell and the mind, it enjoys all the objects of senses. Those that are deluded do not see it when it remains in the body, or when it quits it, when it enjoys, or when it is joined with qualities. Those however who have the eye of knowledge see it.”

‡ *Kshatriya* is the warrior caste. We have more than once said in this book that when Krishna was born there was no regular caste system in India. This word and other such words indicate that the Gita was subsequently written.

§ In reading the Gita our readers must mark a few words which have been differently explained by different commentators. We shall point them out as we proceed.

“If you do not fight this righteous battle, you will incur sin by abandoning your duty and sacrificing your fame. Every man will proclaim your ever-lasting infamy. To him who is honoured, infamy is a greater calamity than death. All the great car-warriors will think that you abstain from the battle through fear. You will be lightly thought of by those who honoured you before. Decrying your powers, your enemies will say of you things unutterable. What could be more painful to you than this? If you be killed, you will go to heaven; and if you be victorious, you will enjoy the whole world. Therefore, O Arjuna, be resolved to fight. Arise.”*

“Considering pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, all equal and same, be ready to fight; you will then incur no sin.”†

* Krishna then says, “The knowledge now imparted to you is relating to *Sankhya*. Now listen to *Yoga*, which, if well possessed, cuts off *Karmabandhanam*. We shall explain *Sankhya*, and *Yoga* later on. *Karmabandhanam* means the binding laws of rebirths resulting from the effects of actions performed in this life. Our readers will be able to understand it more fully when they will read the whole of Srikrishna’s Great Teachings.”

† The sentence italicised is the key-note of Srikrishna’s teachings.

CHAPTER XVIII

ACTION AND DEVOTION

“O ARJUNA,” continued Krishna, “the understanding of devotional men* is of one branch ; but undevidational men’s understanding† is of many branches. ‡ The Vedas relate of the three

* We have translated the word *Byavasahi* by *Devotional men*. It means those that have firm faith in God. The *sloka* means that a man whose mind is devotional never thinks of any things else but God, but an undevidational man’s mind is full of many matters,—such as wealth, fame, pleasures, luxuries &c. &c. We must say it is very difficult to convey the exact idea of these and other Sanskrit words by English equivalents.

† *Buddhi* is translated by *Understanding*. *Buddhi* is placed above *Mana* (mind) ; above *Buddhi* is *Atman* (soul or self).

‡ Just after this are four slokas, 42—44, and 46, Chap. II. They are a covert attack on the Vedas. We give the translation. “Those that are not learned, those that delight in the Vedas, those that say there is nothing else, those that are fond of worldly pleasures, those that regard heaven as the highest object for acquisition, say flowery words about the birth resulting from the fruits of actions and about multifarious rites (such as sacrifices) that promise to give wealth and enjoyments. Those whose minds have been stolen by the lovers of enjoyments and wealth can have no such devotional

qualities.* Rise beyond the influences of these three qualities.† Be unaffected by heat or cold, pleasure

feelings as to make them *live in God*." The word is *Samadhi*; we translate it by *living in God*. We shall have to speak more of this word later on.

And again sloka 46 says—"The utility of the Vedas to a Bramha-knowing man is as much as that of a small tank when all places are flooded with water."

* Three qualities are *Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*. The Gita itself clearly explains them in its chapter XIV, slokas 5—16. It says;—" *Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*, these three qualities of Nature, bind down the internal Self in the body of beings. Amongst three, *Satwa*, from its untainted nature, from its being enlightening, and from its being free from misery, keeps the Self bound with the attachment of happiness and knowledge. *Raja*, having desire for its essence, is of thirst and attachment. Therefore it binds the embodied Self with the attachment of work. *Tama* is born of ignorance and therefore it deludes the embodied Self. It leads the Self in error, indolence and sleep. *Satwa* unites the Self with happiness. *Raja* with works and *Tama* with error."

"*Satwa* remains if *Raja* is repressed, and *Raja* remains if *Satwa* and *Tama* repressed. When knowledge pervades everything in this body, then should one know that *Satwa* has been developed. When avarice, activity, fondness for works, want of tranquility and desire are born in this body, then should one know that *Raja* has been developed. When gloom, inactivity, error and delusion are born in this body, then should one know that *Tama* has been developed. The fruit of *Satwa* is good and untainted; the fruit of *Raja* is misery, and the fruit of *Tama* is ignorance."

† What did Krishna mean by "rising beyond the influences

and pain. Be steady always in Brahma (the Supreme One); be free from anxiety for new acquisitions and from anxiety for the preservation of old ones. Be self-satisfied.* You have concern

of these three qualities?" He himself explains it in the Gita, chapter XIV., slokas 22-26.

"He, who has no aversion for knowledge, work or ignorance (the results of these three qualities) when they are present, and he who does not long for them when they are absent, has risen beyond these three qualities. He, who remains unconcerned, having been not shaken by these three qualities, who sits and moves not, thinking that it is the qualities and not he who is engaged in their functions, has risen beyond these three qualities. He, to whom pain and pleasure are alike, who is self-restrained, to whom a sod of earth, a stone, and a piece of gold, are all alike, to whom the agreeables and the disagreeables are the same, to whom praise and censure are alike, has risen beyond these three qualities. He, to whom honour and dishonour are the same, to whom friends and foes are alike, who is discernment and who has renounced all self-exertion, has risen beyond these three qualities. He, who worships me (God) with exclusive devotion, has risen beyond the three qualities and has become fit for admission into the nature of Brahma."

* In this sloka there are a few words very difficult to be translated into English. We have given above mere a vague idea of them. We have translated the word *Atmaban* by *Self-satisfied*. It does not give the exact idea. When our readers will read the entire Gita, then they will know what *Atmaban* really means. See page 107, the words of Srikrishna.

only with actions and not with their fruits. Never the fruits of actions be your motive and aim. Do not also by any means have attachment in action.* Casting off all attachments and considering success and non-success the same, O Arjuna, perform actions in *Yoga*.† Such *Equanimity* in performing actions is called *Yoga*.

Sacrifices and other religious rites‡ (which go by the name of *Yoga*.) are far inferior to the *Yoga*

* Krishna has explained later on what is "*action*" and what is "*in action*."

† The present meaning of *Yoga* is certain mysterious processes and hard austerities such as *Pranayama* &c. by which one is said to attain to Bramha. It was originally written upon by Rishi Patanjali; it is one of the six Hindu philosophical systems, and is known by the name of *Patanjal Yoga Darsanam*.

Yoga literally means "addition," "co-mingling," "joining," &c. In the *Gita* it means a certain system by which one can attain to, or join, or co-mingle with Bramha. We meet in the *Gita* various sorts of *Yoga*, of which *Jnana Yoga* and *Karma Yoga* are chief, *i.e.* attaining to Bramha by "Knowledge" and attaining to Bramha by "Action." The *Yoga of Action* Krishna explains above by saying, "such equanimity is called *Yoga*."

‡ The word is here *Karma*. *Karma* literally means "*action*," "work," but here it means sacrifices and religious rites. In the Vedic Hinduism, *Karma* has no other meaning except sacrifices &c. But in the *Gita* it means all works and

of *Knowledge* ;* therefore attain to the *Yoga of Knowledge*. The men that desire for the fruits of actions are pitiable. A *Yogee of Knowledge*† abandons both sin and virtue. Therefore apply yourself to *Yoga*. Such *Cleverness in action* is called *Yoga*.”‡

“The learned *Yogee of Knowledge*, abandoning all fruits of actions, attains to the Highest State by being freed from the bindings of rebirths. When your understanding will leave the fortress of delusion, then will you be indifferent to all that you have heard or will hear. When your mind, unconfounded by the *Sruti* (Vedas), will remain firm in God without being attracted by other

actions performed by man, or, to be more definite, his “Duties.”

* Now Krishna speaks of the *Yoga of Knowledge*. The word is here *Buddhi Yoga*. All this will be elaborately dealt with later on.

† The *Yogee of Knowledge* (*Budhiyukta*) is one who attains to Bramha by “Knowledge.”

‡ There are many actions and works for man to perform, but all actions and works do not make a man attain to Bramha. Those actions and works only that lead to it should be performed. Those that have the cleverness to perform only those acts that make a man attain to Bramha, apply themselves to *Yoga*. Therefore such *cleverness in action* is *Yoga*.

matters) and will *live in God*, then will you attain to *Yoga*.”*

“What is the nature, O Krishna,” asked Arjuna, “of one whose understanding is *firm in God* and who *lives in God*?† What does he say, how does he live, how does he move?”

“When a man,” replied Krishna, “abandons all his mental desires and becomes pleased in his Self is called a man of devotion.‡ He, who is not moved in misery, who has no cravings for pleasures and who is free from attachments, anger and fear, is called a man of devotion. He, who neither feels exultation nor aversion on receiving either the good or the bad, and who withdraws all his senses from all the worldly objects of senses as a tortoise withdraws its limbs, is called a man of devotion.

* This is also a covert attack on the Vedas and the Vedic rites and doctrines. *Sruti* means the Vedas. In these three *Slokas* there are some words which the various commentators have variously explained to suit their purpose. *Srutibipratipanna* is an instance. Thus those slokas in which they are apparently attacked may also mean a great veneration for them,—such is the elasticity of the Sanskrit words.

† The words are *Sthithaprajna* and *Samadhistha*.

‡ We have translated the word “*Sthithaprajna*” by “a man whose understanding is firm in god.” To make it shorter we use here “a man of devotion.”

Pondering over worldly matters breeds attachment. From their attachment, desire is produced. From desire, anger is begot. From anger is produced the want of discrimination (delusion); from this delusion is produced confusion of memory; from the confusion of memory loss of reason and understanding; and from the loss of reason, final destruction.

The man, who has controlled his senses and is free from attachment and aversion, though he moves amongst the objects of senses, attains to Peace.* Peace being attained all miseries are destroyed.

Then Krishna says, "An abstinent man, (say a stern ascetic) may withdraw himself from all worldly objects, but he cannot abandon his mental desires. They fly from him only who has *seen* the Supreme; for then there remains nothing further to be desired by him. The madly boisterous senses forcibly steal the mind of even that wise man who tries to attain final emancipation. The *Yogee* solely depends upon me (God) and keeps all his senses under control. He, who has brought all his senses under subjugation is a man of devotion."

* The word is *Prasad*. "Peace" does not give its full signification. It is the same word we have previously used, namely "Self-satisfied." It means that state of mind of the man who, as Krishna says, "becomes pleased in his self by his own self," *i. e.* who has no cravings whatsoever, and thus whose mind is in complete Peace.

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The understanding of the man who has attained to Peace soon becomes firm in God.

An undevotional man has no understanding (firm in God); he has no contemplation (of God). He who has no such contemplation has no Peace.* Where is happiness for him who has no Peace? As the wind destroys a boat in the sea, so is the understanding of that man destroyed whose mind follows the roving senses. Therefore he whose senses are brought under control from all the objects of senses is a man of devotion. When it is night to all creatures, the self-controlled man is awake; when creatures are awake, a *Muni*† sees not around him. ‡

As the various waters enter the ocean, but do not make any decrease or increase in it, so he in whom all objects of desires enter, but cannot make any impressions attains to peace ; but not he who

* Here the word is *Santi*, literally "peace."

† *Muni* means a self-controlled man of devotion. *Muni* and *Rishi* are almost synonyms.

‡ This *sloka* is rather difficult to be understood. It has been variously explained. We believe it means, that in which the people find pleasures and attachment is nothing to a man of devotion. And again that in which they see nothing is that in which he finds everything.

desires to have objects of senses. The man, who moves about abandoning all desires, and being unattached to any thing and free from all attachment and egoism, attains to Peace. This is, O Arjuna, *Living in God**. Attaining this state, none remains in delusion of this world. Remaining in this state at the time of death, one attains to *Brahma Nirvana*.”†

* The word is *Bramhasthithi*,—“staying in Bramha.”

† *Nirvana* literally means “extinction.” *Bramha-Nirvana* would mean “extinction in Bramha.” The word “Nirvana” is one of the most important terms in the Buddhistic doctrines. There also it means total extinction of the mind and soul. The difference between the Buddhistic “Nirvana” and the Hindu “Bramha-Nirvana” is that the Buddhists say it is possible for a man to extinguish the fire that is in him, namely his mind and soul. The Hindus say it is possible to bring into extinction the mind and soul of a man by mixing it up with the Great Soul. The Buddhistic *Nirvana* is a man without a soul; the Hindu *Bramha-Nirvana* is a man with the Supreme Soul. In one, man becomes the Supreme Man, in the other the Supreme soul. Both ideas are grand; nothing could be grander.

The state of *Bramha-Nirvana* is more clearly defined by Krishna later on.

CHAPTER XIX

KNOWLEDGE AND WORK

“IF Knowledge,”* asked Arjuna, “O Krishna, is

* Krishna thus explains “*Knowledge*” in the Gita, chap. XIII., slokas, 1—18. “This body is called *Kshetra*. The learned men call him who knows it *Kshetrajna*. Know me (God) as *Kshetrajna* in all *Kshetras*. The knowledge of *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* is the True Knowledge.” It virtually means, therefore, “Know thyself” and “Know God.”

Krishna then continues,—“Hear from me in brief what is *Kshetra*, what are its natures, what are its changes, what is its origin and what are its powers. All these have been sung by many *Rishis* in various ways and in various verses, in Bramha-knowing texts and in doubt-removing reasoning.”

“The element, egoism, understanding, primal Nature, ten senses, five objects of senses, one mind, desire, aversion, happiness, misery, body, consciousness, patience. all these in brief are *Kshetras* with all their changes.”

“Purity, constancy, self-restraint, forgiveness, uprightness, absence of vanity, of ostentation and egoism, freedom from fear, independence of objects of senses, perception of misery and evil in birth, death, decrepitude and diseases, freedom from attachment, absence of love for children, wife, home &c., constant equanimity of heart in both good and evil, unswerving devotion to me (God), non-meditation on any thing else (except God), frequenting lonely places and hatred for the concourse of men, and firm

in your opinion superior to Action,* why do you

knowledge of the relation that exists between the great Self and the individual Self, perception of the objects of true knowledge,—all these are called “ Knowledge.” All that is contrary to them is “ Ignorance.”

“ I shall now declare to you the “ Object of Knowledge,” knowing which one obtains immortality. It is the great Bramha of no beginning. He is neither *sat* nor *asat*. It is the Supreme Bramha whose hands and feet are on all sides, whose eyes, heads, faces, are on all sides, who hears on all sides and dwells pervading all in this world. He, being devoid of the senses, is possessed of all the qualities of the senses. He sustains all things, but has no attachment for anything. He has no attributes, but at the same time possesses all attributes. He is within all creatures immobile and mobile. He is not knowable as he is subtle. He is remote yet near. He, being undistributed in anything, remains as if distributed in everything. He is the sustainer of all beings, he is the destroyer and the creator of all. He is the light of all luminous bodies, he is beyond all darkness ; he is knowledge, the object of knowledge and the end of knowledge. He is the height of all.”

“ Thus in brief *Kshetra*, knowledge, and the Object of Knowledge are declared to you. Knowing all this, my friend, attain to Yoga.”

* Thus does Krishna explain *Action*. The Gita, chap. XVIII., slokas 13—19, say:—“ I shall declare to you the five causes for the completion of action, as told in the *Sankhya* which treats of the annihilation of actions. Substratum (body), agent (ego), organs (physical, as eyes &c.), efforts (various to attain salvation) and the Deity are the five causes of action. With body, mind or speech whatever works, good

or bad, a man performs, these five are their causes. Such being the case, he, who, owing to his uncultivated understanding and dull mind, sees his own self as the sole agent of all actions, sees nothing. He who has no egoism, whose understanding is not attached to the fruits of actions does not kill, if he kills all these people. He is never under the fetter of actions."

"*Knowledge*, the Object of *knowledge*, and the *Known* are the threefold *impulse* of action. *Instrument*, *action* and *agent* are the threefold *compliment* of action. There are three sorts of *Knowledge*, *Action* and *Agent* according to the different qualities (*Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*.)"

"*Satwa* knowledge is that which makes one see one Eternal Essence undivided in the divided. *Raja* knowledge makes one see various essences of different kinds in different things. *Tama* knowledge is that which makes one see various single objects, as if they are each of the whole. The knowledge which is without reason, without truth, and which is mean and low is the result of *Tama*."

"*Satwa* action is that which is performed without attachment, desire or aversion, or without the desire of obtaining any fruits from it. *Raja* action is that which is performed with great efforts by one who desires to obtain fruits from it and who is filled with egoism. *Tama* action is that which is performed from delusion without regard to its consequences, and to one's own loss and injury as well as that of others."

"*Satwa* agent is he who is free from attachment and egoism, who is full of constancy and energy, who remains unmoved both in success and in failure. *Raja* agent is he who is full of affection, who desires for the fruits of actions, who is covetous, cruel and impure, and who feels both pleasure and sorrow. *Tama* agent is he who is void of application, who is without discernment, who is obstinate, deceitful, malicious, idle, desponding, and procrastinating"

then prompt me to this fearful action?* You confound my mind by equivalent words.† Tell me definitely what is good for me.”

“I have told you,” replied Krishna, “there are two paths‡ in this world,—that of *Yoga of Knowledge* followed by the *Sankhyas*, and that of *Yoga of Action* followed by the *Yogees*. Man does not attain freedom from action by not performing actions. By renunciation of action none attains to salvation. None can ever remain without performing some action. Man must perform actions impelled by the laws of Nature.§ Restraining the organs of action, that deluded man who ponders over the objects of senses in his mind, speaks but lies. But on the other hand, he who

* It refers to the great battle.

† Praising “action” once and praising ‘knowledge’ next.

‡ Two paths to obtain salvation.

§ Nature of *Prakriti*. This is what Krishna says about *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. The Gita, Chap. XIII., slokas 19-23 say :—“Know that *Prakriti* & *Purusha* are both without beginnings. Know all modifications of matter and all its qualities spring from *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* is the source of the working of causes and effects. *Purusha* is the source of the capacity of enjoining pleasures and pains. *Purusha*, dwelling in *Prakriti*, enjoys the qualities that are born in her. The cause of good birth and bad birth of *Purusha* is its connection

performs the *Yoga of Action* by works and acts restraining his senses by his mind is highly esteemed. Therefore always perform action, for action is better than *in-action*. Your body cannot be kept alive without performing actions.* But except God's works all works produce *Karmabandhana*.† Therefore, O Arjuna, perform actions without any desire to obtain their fruits.‡ The man who

with these qualities. In this body *Purusha* is distinct, he is the surveyor, adviser, supporter and enjoyer; he is the mighty Lord and Supreme Self."

* The word is *Jajna*, which literally means "sacrifice,"—a Vedic religious ceremony. Here the word means Vishnu or God. We follow Sanker Swami and other great commentators. What are the God's works,—is a question. The Gita explains it later on. We might say here "it is the duty to one's own self, to one's own society, country and others, and finally to God."

† *Karmabandhana*—the bond of rebirths.

‡ Then Krishna goes on to place before Arjuna a precedent. The Gita, chap III., slokas 10-16 says :—"In the time of yore Brahma created the creatures along with Sacrifice" and said, "Improve yourself with this. Let it produce all that you desire. Please the celestials and let the celestials please you. Thus pleasing each other, you will attain to the highest good. Being pleased with the Sacrifice, the celestials will give your desired enjoyments. Whoever enjoys the things given by the celestials without giving them first is a thief. The men, who eat the remnants of sacrificial things, are freed from all sins. The bad men who cook only for themselves commit sin. Creatures are the outcome of

is attached to his own self, who is pleased with his own self, and who is contented with his own self has no actions to perform. He has no concern in actions done or not done in this world. Nor has he any dependence on any being in the whole world. Therefore without any attachment, perform actions that *ought* to be performed.* The man who performs actions without attachment attains to the Supreme. Janaka and others attained to the Supreme by performing actions."†

food ; is produced by rain. Rain is produced by Sacrifice and the Sacrifice is produced by Action ; Action is produced from Brahma ; Brahma is produced from the Imperishable. Therefore all-pervading Brahma is always established in the Sacrifice. The sensual and sinful men, who do not conform to this revolving wheel, live in vain "

There are different explanations of the above : but we believe the main object of Krishna's citing this instance is to show that this world cannot go on without action ; therefore none can live without performing some physical or mental actions.

* The word is *Karjan Karma*,—the works that ought to be done ; in brief one's *duties*.

† Janaka was a great king of Videha. He was vastly learned as well as highly raised in the spiritual matters. It is said he attained to the Supreme. But like other Rishis who are said to have attained Salvation, he did not retire into the deep forest. He performed all his Royal duties, and all other

“And again having regard to keeping to the people attached to their own duties, you should perform actions. Whatever a great man does, so do the masses. What great men consider authorities, the masses follow.* The ignorant men act with attachment to the fruits of action; the learned men, however, in order to stick the ignorant men to their duties, should act just like them but without attachment. A wise man should not confuse the minds of the ignorant men who are attached to actions. He should make them take to actions by himself acting without attachment.”

“Every thing in every way is done by the laws of Nature.† Only he whose mind is deluded by

necessary works as any other worldly man. Krishna means to say that by performing one's own duties, one can attain to the Supreme as this king did.

* Then Krishna goes on to speak of himself. The Gita chap. III., slokas 22-23 says :—“There is, O Arjuna, nothing to do for me in the three worlds. I have nothing to acquire which I have not already acquired, but still I do perform actions &c. &c.”

And again slokas 30-32 say. “Therefore dedicating all actions to me and knowing the mystery of Self, engage in battle &c. &c.”

† We have translated *Guna* of *Prakriti* by “law of Nature.

egoism considers himself the doer of actions. The wise men, who know that Self is distinct from the qualities of Nature as well as from the actions in this world, feel no egoism, knowing that qualities deal with only qualities.* A man of perfect knowledge, should not shake the beliefs of the men of imperfect knowledge who, being deluded by the qualities of Nature, form attachment to the actions done by those qualities of Nature."

"Even a man of Perfect Knowledge acts according to his own nature. All beings follow Nature. What then the restraints of the organs of actions would avail?† All senses have their likes and dislikes for respective fixed objects. But

It means the qualities *Satya*, *Raja* and *Tama*, the source of all actions in Nature."

* This Sloka refers to those that know that every thing is done by Nature,—“who know that it is not they that act but only their senses and organs of actions that act ;—these men are never filled with egoism, pride and vanity."

† It is a covert attack on the *Sannyasins* who renounce all actions and go to the jungle to obtain salvation. Krishna says, “such renunciation of all actions will not avail at all,—it will not give salvation to any man, for by doing this, no man can really renounce all actions. He may renounce all physical actions, but he will not be able to renounce all his mental actions."

none should be under their control, for they are one's great enemies.* One's own *Dharma*,† even if imperfectly performed, is superior to the perfectly performed *Dharma* of others. Death is preferable in performing one's own *Dharma*; for the *Dharma* of others is dangerous."‡

* Opponents to one's way to the path of salvation.

† This word we have not translated here. We have repeatedly said, the word *Dharma* has various significations; it means "religion,"—it means "nature." it means "duty," it means "virtue," and so on. Here the word is *Swa Dharma*, i.e. one's own duties, enjoined by Nature.

‡ In chapter XVIII. the Gita Slokas 45—48 say :—
 "Every man attains to perfection by performing his own duties. Worshipping Him from whom are the exertions of beings and by whom all the universe is pervaded, man is seen to attain to perfection with the performance of his own duties. Better is one's own duty, though imperfectly performed, than another's duty well-performed. Man incurs no sin by performing actions prescribed by Nature. Man must not abandon actions prescribed by Nature, however bad they might look, for all actions are enveloped in errors as fire by smoke.

CHAPTER XX

VIRTUE AND SIN

“THEN, O Krishna,” asked Arjuna, “by whom impelled does man commit sin, though unwilling, as if driven by some force ?”

“It is Desire ;” replied Krishna, “it is Wrath,* born of the *Raja* quality in Nature. It is greatly ravenous ; it is greatly sinful. Know it to be a great enemy in this world.† As fire is enveloped by smoke, a mirror by dust, the fetus by the womb, so Knowledge‡ is enveloped by it. Knowledge is always enveloped by this insatiable fire,

* Wrath is the result of desire. When desire is in any way checked, then wrath is produced. Krishna says in the Gita, chap. II, slokas 62-63. “Pondering over worldly matters produces desire ; desire produces wrath ; wrath produces want of discrimination or delusion ; delusion produces confusion of memory ; confusion of memory produces loss of reason ; loss of reason produces final destruction.”

† Enemy in the path of happiness in this world and of final salvation in the next.

‡ Knowledge in all these places means the True Knowledge, as explained by Krishna in the Gita, chap. XIII., slokas 1-18.

Desire, which is the constant enemy of a Man of Knowledge.”*

* In the Gita, chap. XVI. Krishna says:—“There are two kinds of beings in this world, namely “God-like” and “Demoniac.” Let me first describe the “God-like.”

“Fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance, Yoga of knowledge, Gifts, self-restraint, Sacrifices, Study of Self, meditation, uprightness, non-doing of injury, truth, freedom from anger, abandonment of the desire for the fruits of actions, peace, freedom from fault-finding, compassion for all, absence of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of restlessness, vigour, forgiveness, firmness, cleanliness, absence of quarrelsomeness, freedom from vanity,—all these belong to a God-like man.”

“Now hear about the demoniac men. The demoniac know not what is *Prabritti* and what is *Nibritti*. (It is very difficult to translate these two words.) In brief they mean “mental actions” and “suspension of mental actions.” Neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth, exists in them. They say that this universe is false; it has no guiding principle, nor has it a God. It has been produced by the union of one another,—the result of lust. These men of lost self and little intelligence and of fearful deeds, believing and depending on this and becoming the enemies of the world, are born for the destruction of the universe. Being indued with hypocrisy, conceit and folly and cherishing insatiable desires, they believe in false things and perform all sinful acts. Cherishing boundless thoughts,—thoughts which are limited by death only,—and considering the employment of their desires as the highest aim of life, being bound in hundred nooses of hope and addicted to lust and wrath, they eagerly desire to possess unfairly the hoards of wealth, so

"It is said that its seat is in the senses, in the mind, and in the understanding of a man. By the help of these three, (senses, mind and understanding) it deludes man by enveloping his knowledge. Therefore, O Arjuna, bring your senses under control and conquer this embodiment of sin (desire) which destroys both *Jnana* and *Bijnana*.* It is said, great are the senses; greater than the senses is the mind; greater than the

that with them they may satisfy their desires. 'This is obtained to-day by *me*,' 'I possess this wealth,' 'All this wealth will be mine in addition to what I possess,' 'This enemy has been killed by *me*,' 'I shall kill other enemies also,' 'I am the lord,' 'I am the enjoyer,' 'I am successful,' 'I am powerful and happy,' 'I am wealthy,' 'I am nobly born.' 'Who is there in the world as I am,' 'I shall perform sacrifices,' 'I shall make gifts,' 'I shall be merry,'—thus say all demoniac men deluded as they are by ignorance. Tossed about by innumerable thoughts, enveloped by delusion and attached to the enjoyment of desires, these men gradually sink into the lowest hell."

* The word *Jnana* we have translated by "knowledge." *Bijnana* means "knowledge in particular." The modern meaning of *Bijnana* is "Science." But we believe the author of the Gita does not mean "Science" by *Bijnana*. Most likely he means the special knowledge of Brahma's unknowable Self (God). Some commentators say *Jnana* is the knowledge of God's manifested *Universal Nature* and *Bijnana* is the knowledge of God's manifested *Spiritual Nature*.

mind is understanding. He who is greater than the understanding, namely the *Purusha*, is the great Self. Thus knowing *Him* greater than the understanding and making one's own Self firm (in God) by his own Self, conquer this unconquerable enemy, Desire.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GREAT DECLARATION

"I told this imperishable *Yoga*," continued Krishna, "to Vivaswata. He declared it to Manu ; Manu declared it to Ikshaku.* Thus coming down from generation to generation, it became known to the royal sages.† But this *Yoga*‡ was lost to the world by long lapse of time ; you are my devotee and friend, therefore I have told you this old *Yoga*, for this mysterious knowledge§ is highly good."

* These are celebrated kings of ancient India. They are all known as men who attained to the Supreme by their great learning and piety.

† There were two classes of sages in ancient India, namely *Rajarshis* and *Brahmarshis*. The *Rajarshis* were kings who were great in learning, knowledge and piety. *Brahmarshis* were those that retired into the forest to attain to Brahma and thus became great in knowledge and piety. We have translated *Rajarshis* by "royal sages."

‡ *Yoga* here means the great mysterious knowledge by which a man can attain to the Supreme.

§ This mysterious knowledge is extremely good and beneficial to man, because it points out to him the path of salvation.

"Later is your birth," said Arjuna "prior is the birth of Vivaswata ; how shall I know then that you declared it first ?"

"Many births" replied Krishna, "of yours and mine have taken place. I know them all, O Arjuna, but you do not know them. Though I have no birth, though I am imperishable, though I am the Lord of all creatures, yet resting on *Prakriti*, * I take births out of my *Maya*."†

"Whensoever virtue languishes and sin predominates, I create myself. I take birth age after age‡ for the protection of the good and for the

* Resting on *Prakriti* means "joining with Nature."

† It is very difficult to give the exact signification of the word *Maya*. It has been variously translated by the words "delusion" "illusion" &c. It is the mysterious result of the great *Purusha's*—the unknowable Supreme One's—resting on *Prakriti*. It is the mysterious "illusion" that comes over the great Self when it remains in the human body. This mysterious power of the Supreme One makes a man believe that he is not the Supreme One, but quite a different and insignificant being, living in a vast universe, though really he is none other than the great unknowable. One existing in an unknowable state. This mysterious *Maya* can only be destroyed by "true knowledge."

‡ Almost these very words were said by Jesus in St. Mathew, Chap XXIV., 7-27.

destruction of the bad and for the establishment of the True Religion.* He who truly knows my these wonderful births and deeds† casts off his body and is not born again. He obtains me (God). Many holy sages,‡ who were free from attachment, fear and wrath who were full of me, and who were dependent on me, attained to my essence.§ I bestow my favours in different ways in which different men worship me. Men in every way follow my path.|| With the

* Though Krishna has been described as the Supreme Lord by all the Puranas, by the Harivansa and Mahavarata, we have pointed out that except in the Gita, he himself never gave out that he was the Supreme One. On the contrary he more than once said that he was but a man. See pg. 61—62. In the Gita he not only declared himself as the Supreme One, but manifested himself in his Great Form before Arjuna. See our note latter on, *anent* Krishna's manifestation of his Supreme Form.

† The words are *Janma* and *Karma*. Here it means his incarnation in this world as Vrisni prince Krishna and his career from his birth in Mathura to his death in Pravasha.

‡ We have translated the word *Jnanatapasa* as "holy sages." It literally means, "Those that meditate on Brahma by knowledge."

§ The word "*Bhaba*" has various significations. We have used the word "essence" here.

|| He means that "men, whatever be the modes of their worship, worship God; i.e., a Heathen, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Hindu, though their modes of worship are

desire of obtaining success in their works, men worship the celestials in this world, for success in action is easily obtained in this world of men. I have created the four castes according to different qualites and actions* in different men. Though I am their Creator, yet know me as being Non-creator and Imperishable. Actions do not touch me ; I have no attachment in the fruits of actions. He who knows me as such is not tied down by actions. Knowing this, men, desirous of emancipation, thus did perform actions in the days of yore. Therefore you too perform actions, as was done by men of old in the olden times."

"Even men of true knowledge are confused

different, all worship the same Supreme One and follow in the path of God."

He further says that God bestows different favours on different men as they worship Him in different ways,—i. e., He bestows wealth on some, fame on others, knowledge on some, different sorts of births in different sorts of men,—different states of happiness and misery after death, and so forth.

* He means God has created different sorts of men according to the fruits of actions performed in their previous births and also according to the different qualities, (*Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*) that are in different men.

about what is action and what is in-action.* I shall speak to you about that action learning which you will be freed from the evils. There are things to know in "actions," there are things also to know in "in-actions ;" there are also things to know in "forbidden actions." The nature of actions is abstruse."†

"He who sees 'in-action' in 'action' and 'action' in 'in-action' is wise among men. Though a doer of all actions, he is still a *Yogee*. The learned men call him wise whose all actions are free from desires and will, and whose actions are burnt down by the fire of knowledge. Being free from attachment of the fruits of actions, being always contented and depending on none, although such men engage in actions, they are really do nothing at all. Being devoid of desire, having the mind and the soul under control, and casting off all worldly concerns, he who performs actions‡ only for the

* "Actions" are those that *ought* to be performed in this world. "In-actions" mean "renunciation of action." "Forbidden actions" are those that *ought* not to be performed. All this has been clearly defined by Krishna in the Gita. (See next chapter).

† See our Note.

‡ The word is *Jajnayacharata*, literally "performed

preservation of his body incurs no sin. Being contented with what is spontaneously got, being beyond the influences of the pairs of opposites, being free from all jealousies, and being equable in both success and failure, such a man, although he performs actions, is not tied down by action. The actions, performed in *Yoga** by a man who is

in *Yoga*," Krishna repeatedly says that "actions *must* be performed in this world : and renunciation of all actions is neither good nor possible. Therefore those actions that *ought* to be performed *must* be performed, but all these actions *must be performed in Yoga*, the state which he explains all through the Gita. In the two chapters following our readers will find what *Yoga* and *Yogee* really are. Both have been clearly explained.

* Mentioning that actions should be performed in *Yoga*, Krishna goes on to speak of all the various sorts of *Yogmas*. *i.e.* sacrifices and rites, that were then practised by the Aryans, though his meaning of *Yoga* was quite different from them. Our readers will find, that he says knowledge is the best of all sacrifices *i. e.* *Yogmas*. It is better that we should quote the passage here. The *Gita*, chap. IV., slokas 24-32 say :—

"Brahma is the vessel of libation, Brahma is the libation itself, Brahma is the fire, Brahma is the pourer of libation, — to him who thus meditates upon Brahma in all his actions, Brahma is the goal to which he proceeds. Some *Yogees* perform the 'sacrifice' to the celestials, others offer up sacrifices to Brahma-Fire. Others offer up in the fire of self-restraint all his senses, such as the senses of hearing &c. Others again offer up the objects of senses, such as sound &c.

devoid of attachments, who is free from passions, and whose mind is steady in knowledge, are destroyed.’*’

“The *Yoga* of knowledge, O Arjuna, is superior to all the *Yogas* performed with the desire to gain possessions (either in this world or in the next), for all actions are wholly and fully completed in Knowledge. Therefore obtain knowledge by reverentially saluting the learned, by asking them questions, and by doing service to them. The men of knowledge and the men that know Truth will teach you Knowledge. Having obtained such Knowledge, you will not again fall into Delusion. By means of it, you will see all beings in you first and then in me (God).’

into the fire of senses ; others offer up all the actions of the senses and those of the life-breaths into the *Yoga*-fire of self-restraint kindled by knowledge. Some perform sacrifices for gaining possessions, some the sacrifice of penance, others again the sacrifice of concentration of mind and so forth.

Krishna thus concludes,—“Thus sacrifices of various sorts are mentioned in the Vedas. Know them all as the results of actions. Knowing this, you will be freed from the fetters of the world.”

* The word is *Atmabanta*,—a man in Peace, (See note pg. 214.)

“If you be the greatest sinner amongst all the sinful men, you will still cross over the ocean of sin by means of the boat of knowledge. As the blazing fire reduces all woods to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes. There is nothing in this world which is so much purifying as Knowledge. The man who has attained to *Yoga* (of action) obtains it in time. The man, having reverence and faith,—and the man of self-restraint,—obtains Knowledge. Obtaining Knowledge, he soon gains the highest Peace. He who is ignorant, who has no reverence and faith, and who is full of misgivings and doubt, is lost. The man whose mind is full of doubts has for him neither this world nor the next, nor any happiness.”

“Actions do not fetter him who is self-possessed, whose doubts have been all removed by Knowledge and who has placed all his actions in *Yoga*.* Therefore destroying with the sword

* Our readers must have by this time found out what connection Krishna lays down between *Jnana* and *Karma*, i. e. the *Yoga* of Knowledge and the *Yoga* of Action. The general belief is that in order to gain True Knowledge i. e. the Knowledge of the Supreme One, is to renounce al

of knowledge these misgivings of yours, which are but the result of ignorance, engage in *Yoga*.”*

actions whatsoever. Krishna says nothing could be more erroneous. He gives preference to the performance of actions over every other things. In the next two chapters he explains it more fully.

* That is,—Arise and fight without the least desire for any result.

CHAPTER XXII

THE YOGEE OF ACTION

“O KRISHNA,” said Arjuna, “you advise me to adopt *Karma-Sannyasa* ; you then again advise me to adopt *Yoga* ;* tell me truly which of the two is superior.”

“Both *renunciation of action*,” replied Krishna, “and *pursuit of action* are means to obtain Emancipation. But of these two, the pursuit of action is better than the renunciation of action.† Know

* The words are *Sannyasa* and *Karma yoga* ; we translate the first by “renunciation of action” and the second by “pursuit of action.” We have already said, it was the custom of the ancient Aryans, nay some of the modern Hindus, to renounce all wordly actions and to retire into a forest in order to acquire knowledge and to meditate on Brahma. It was the general belief that “knowledge” could not be acquired without renouncing all wordly actions. Such “renunciation of action” is called *Sannyasa*. But we find Krishna gives preference to the “pursuit of wordly actions” over the “renunciation of wordly actions,” which is known by the name of *Sannyasa*.

† In the Gita, Chapter XVIII., slokas 2—11, Krishna further explains this matter. He there mentions *Sannyasa* and *Tyaga* and points out their difference. He goes on to say :—“Rejection of all works with some particular desire is known by the learned as *Sannyasa*. But the abandonment

him to be always a *Sannyasi*, (though he performs works), who has no aversion and no desire. He who is free from the pairs of opposites* is easily released from the fetters of the world.† Ignorant

of the desire for the fruits of all actions is called *Tyaga* by the discerning men. Some wise men say that work itself should be abandoned considering it to be an evil. They say *Jajna* (Sacrifices), *Dana* (Gifts) and *Tapa* (meditation) should not be abandoned. Listen to my opinion about *Tyaga*. *Tyaga* is of three kinds. Sacrifices, Gifts and Meditation should not be renounced ; they are the means of purifying the wise men. But even these works should be performed without attachment and without the desire to obtain any fruits. This is my firm good opinion. The works that *ought* to be performed should not be abandoned. Such abandonment is the result of delusion, and arises from *Tama*. When work is abandoned from bodily fear, and from the consideration of pain, such abandonment is the result of *Raja*, and one who makes such abandonment never obtains the fruits of *Tyaga*. The abandonment of attachment and of the fruit of action which are performed, because they *ought* to be performed, is the result of *Satwa*. He is a real *Tyagee*, who, being indued with intelligence and freed from all doubts and misgivings, has no aversion for an unpleasant actions and has no attachment for pleasant ones. Actions can by no means be absolutely abandoned by man ; therefore he who abandons the fruits of actions, (but performs actions that *ought to be* performed) is a true *Tyagee*."

* One who is beyond the influences of cold and heat, pain and pleasure &c.

† It means the rebirths. *i. e.* that which causes men to take births again.

men and not learned men say that *Sankhya** and *Yoga* are distinct. He who practises one enjoys the fruits of both. The place that the follower of *Sankhya* obtains is also obtained by the follower of *Yoga*. He sees truly who sees the *Sankhya* and *Yoga* as one and the same. O Arjuna, it is difficult to attain to *Sannyasa* without *Yoga*.† The sages, possessed of *Yoga*, soon attain to Brahma.”

“He who is possessed of *Yoga*,‡ whose mind is pure, who is self-restraint, who has controlled his senses, who sees his own self in all beings, is not

* Krishna has explained *Sankhya* and *Yoga* later on. We use in the text the original words, for their English equivalents are rather long. The followers of *Sankhya* are the *Sannyasis* who have renounced all wordly actions to obtain “knowledge.” The followers of *Yoga* are the *Tyagees* who have abandoned all desires to obtain the fruits of all wordly actions, but who perform them considering that they are “duties.”

† Krishna says that even renunciation of actions *i. e.* *Sannyasa*, is not possible without performing some actions. It is *absolutely impossible* for a man to abandon and to renounce all actions.

‡ We shall often use the word *Yoga* in original. Our readers must always understand by this word “performing all wordly actions that *ought* to be performed without any attachment to them and without any desire whatsoever to obtain any fruits from them.”

fettered by performing actions. The man of *Yoga*, who has understood the Truth, thinks 'I do nothing myself.' When he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, moves, sleeps, breathes, talks, throws out excretions, opens and closes his eyes, he thinks that his senses merely deal with the objects of senses."*

"Abandoning all attachments he who performs actions dedicating them to Brahma,† is not touched by sin, as the lotus-leaves are never wet by water. For the purpose of purifying one's self, the *Yogee* performs actions with his body, mind, the understanding, even with his senses, being freed from all attachments. The *Yogees*, abandoning the desire for the fruits of actions, attain to the highest peace. The *Non-Yogees*, being attached to the fruits of actions, are always tied down to re-births on account of their desires. The man, who is self-controlled, renouncing all actions in his mind, lives at ease within the city of nine gates."‡

* That is his body only works, his mind being absolutely untouched by these actions. His physical senses, merely come into contract with the various objects of senses in the world,—his mind having absolutely nothing to do with them.

† The Supreme One, the Great God.

‡ The phrase means "human body,"—nine gates being nine Physical senses.

"The Lord does neither create the capacity of actions in man, nor the cause of actions, nor the connection of actions with their fruits. Only nature works. The Lord receives no one's sins, nor the virtues of any. Knowledge is enveloped by ignorance, therefore all creatures are deluded.* To them whose Ignorance is destroyed by 'Knowledge,' the Self appears through that 'Knowledge' like the blazing sun. Those whose mind is fully in Him, whose self is in Him, who is devoted to Him, whose goal is He, such men, their sins having been destroyed, go to Him never to return."

"A man of True Knowledge looks on a Brahman endued with learning and humility and also on a cow, an elephant, a dog, or a *Chandala*† as all alike."

* Out of delusion *i. e.* for the want of true "knowledge," they consider that they themselves act whereas they really do nothing ; Nature only works.

† A *Chandala* is a man of the lowest of the Hindu castes : even the touch of his shadow is often considered contamination by the members of the higher castes.

We ask our foreign readers to mark the above grand catholicism of Srikrishna's teachings.—every line of which is a gem in itself.

“Even here in this life the world is conquered by one whose mind rests on “equanimity.”* He is as faultless† as Brahma, therefore he lives in Brahma.‡ The man, whose understanding is firm (in God), who lives in Brahma and who is not deluded, does not exult on obtaining anything agreeable, nor does grieve for getting any thing disagreeable. One, whose Self is not attached to any external objects, obtains the happiness that is in one’s own Self.§ Having his Self united by *Yoga* with Brahma, one obtains the happiness that is imperishable. The pleasures, derived in the world from the objects of senses, are the sources of misery, as they have a beginning as well as an end. Therefore, O Arjuna, a man of knowledge, does not find any pleasures in them. He who is able to withstand the forces of wrath and desire in this world before the dissolution of his body, is a *Yogee* ; he is really happy.”||

* The word is *Samadhistha*.

† It means “perfect.”

‡ The word is *Brahmasthan*. This word is equivalent to *Brahma-Nirvana*, a word which often occurs in this chapter. (See our note on *Brahma-Nirvana*.)

§ See our note on *Prasad*.

|| A dead body does not and can not feel any desire nor

"The *Yogee*, whose happiness is within himself, whose recreations are within himself and whose light is within himself, lives in Brahma, and thus obtains *Brahma-Nirvana*.* That sage obtains *Brahma-Nirvana* whose sins are destroyed, whose

any wrath ; so a man who goes beyond the influence of wrath and desire like a dead body, even when he is alive, is called a *Yogee*.

* Krishna says that a man can attain to Brahma not only when he departs from this life, but it is also possible for him to do it even when he is alive in his this body. He then cited an example of men who attain to Brahma (*i.e.* obtain *Brahma-Nirvana*) in this life. Slokas 27-28, chapter X., the Gita, says:—"The sage who is always intent on emancipation, who has restrained his senses, mind and understanding, who is freed from desire, wrath and fear, who has excluded from his mind all external objects of senses and has directed his sight between the eye-brows, who has mingled into one the upward and the downward life-breaths and made them pass through the nostril, is always emancipated (*i.e.* has obtained *Brahma-Nirvana* even in this life.)"

We need not tell our readers that above is the description of a stern *Sannyasi*, which, Krishna has said, is very difficult to be. Therefore in the next sloka 29, chapter V. he adds:—"He who knows me as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and penances, the great Lord of all the worlds and the Friend of all creatures, obtains Peace. A man of faith and devotion also obtains *Brahma-Nirvana* in this life."

Buddha is said to have obtained *Nirvana* in this life. The words *Brahma-Nirvana* and *Nirvana* were long known in India before the birth of Buddha.

misgivings are removed, who is self-restraint and who is engaged in doing good to all creatures. *Brahma-Nirvana* here in this life while living, and *Brahma-Nirvana* also in after-life when dead are obtained by those *Yogees* who are free from wrath and desire, whose minds are under control, and who have obtained the Knowledge of Self."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE YOGEE OF DEVOTION

“He who performs actions,”* continued Krishna, “that ought to be performed, regardless of their

* We now come to the 6th chapter of the Gita. We must here mention that the Gita contains eighteen chapters, each chapter having a distinct appellation, but each of these appellations has been called *Yoga*. The first chapter is *Arjuna-Bishada-Yoga*, i.e. the *Yoga* of Arjuna's grief. This has been narrated in the Part I of this work.

Chap. II begins from the middle of the chapter II which is known by the name of *Sankhya-Yoga*. We have already explained *Sankhya*. The third chapter is called *Karma-Yoga*, i. e. the *Yoga* of action. The fourth is *Jnana-Yoga* i. e. the *Yoga* of knowledge. The fifth is *Karma-Sannyasa-Yoga* i. e. the *Yoga* of renunciation of action.

The sixth chapter which we now enter upon is called *Ayasa-Yoga*, i. e. the *Yoga* of Practice. To make these grand teachings of the Gita as lucid as possible, we have not followed its divisions and sub-divisions, but made our own. We have divided it in various chapters and given them our own names. We hope our arrangements and headings will be a great help to our readers to understand the Gita.

Though each chapter of the Gita is known by a particular name, yet it contains many things more than what its name signifies. For example though the sixth chapter is called

fruits, is a *Sannyasi* and a *Yogee*,* and not he who discards sacrificial fire† and abstains from all

Avyasa-Yoga, yet it contains rather more of other matters than any teachings on "Practice." Its first portion deals with the *Yoga* of action, the middle portion with the *Yoga* of knowledge,—then follow only a few words on "practice,"—the last portion dealing with a man of devotion.

The chapters 7th to 10th might very well be divided into three distinct parts, namely, (1) The nature of the God, (2) His emanations. (3) His worship. These four chapters are respectively called (a) *Jnana-Bijnana-Yoga*, i.e. the *Yoga* of knowledge and special knowledge, (b) *Akshaya-Brahma-Yoga*, i.e. the *Yoga* of imperishable Brahma, (c) *Rajvidya-Rajgujya-Yoga*, i. e. the *Yoga* of the king of mystery and knowledge, (d) *Bivuti Yoga*, i. e. the *Yoga* of great emanations.

The chapter 11th is *Bishwarupa-Darsana-Yoga*, i. e. the *Yoga* of manifesting the Universal Form. We might say the Gita ends with the 11th chapter,—the remaining seven chapters are but explanatory of the preceding eleven chapters. Our readers will find that we have quoted almost every line of these seven chapters in our foot-notes explanatory of the first eleven chapters. However these seven chapters are respectively called (1) *Bhakti-Yoga*, (2) *Kshetra-Kshetrajna-Yoga*, (3) *Gunatraya-Bivaga-Yoga*, (4) *Purushattama-Yoga*, (5) *Daivasurasampadvivaga-Yoga*, (6) *Sraddhatraya-Bivaga-Yoga* and (7) *Moksha-Yoga*.

* A *Sannyasi* is one who has renounced all worldly actions. A *Yogee* is one who performs all worldly actions, but has abandoned the desire to obtain their fruits.

† Perhaps our readers will not have to be told that every Aryan house-holder in ancient India used to keep a fire

actions. O Arjuna, know what is called *Sannyasa* is also called *Yoga*. He who has not abandoned the desire to obtain the fruits of actions can never be a *Yogee*. To the sage who desires to rise to *Yoga*, action is said to be the means. When he has risen to *Yoga*, *Shama* is said to be the means.* The *Sannyasi*, who is no longer attached

permanently burning in his house. This fire was daily being worshipped by him. To discard this fire meant the breaking up of one's house-hold, retiring into a forest and renouncing all works.

* The word *Shama* is equivalent to *Shamathi*. It means that state in which a man's all physical actions cease, and his mind remains fully and completely concentrated in Brahma. In this very chapter later on in slokas 10—28, Krishna points out what *Shamadhi* is and how it is acquired. We quote the passage in full.

“A *Yogee*, remaining in solitude, restraining his self and mind, having no desire and no concern, should engage in contemplation. Fixing his seat firmly on a pure spot, not too high and not too low, spreading over it a piece of cloth, deer-skin or *Kusa*-grass,—there seated on that seat with his mind fixed on one point,—restraining his mind and senses, one should practise *Yoga* for the purification of his Self. Holding body, head and neck even, unmoved and steady and fixing his eyes on the tip of his own nose,—without looking about in any direction,—with his self in tranquility, freed from fear, adhering to the practices of ascetics, he should re-train his mind, fix his heart on Me (God) and sit down regarding me as his final goal. Thus constantly

to the objects of sense, nor to actions, who has renounced all his resolves and desires is said to have attained to *Yoga*. One should elevate his self by self ; one should not lower his self. A man's self is

devoting his Self to abstraction and contemplation, the *Yogee* whose mind is restrained attains that peace which culminates in final absorption and assimilation with me. *Yoga* is not achieved by the man who eats too much or eats nothing, who sleeps too much or is always awake. The *Yoga* of that man destroys misery who is temperate in food and amusements, who toils duly in all his works, and who is moderate both in sleep and vigil."

"When one's mind, having been well-restrained, becomes confined in one's own self, then that man, being indifferent to all objects of desire, is called a *Yogee*. In an airless place, a light flickers not,—this has been cited as a simile of a *Yogee* whose mind has been restrained and who devotes himself to abstraction. That state in which mind being restrained ceases to work, in which one, seeing the self by self, becomes pleased in self in one experiences that infinite felicity which is beyond the sphere of the senses, and which only the understanding can grasp, adhering to which one never swerves from the Truth, acquiring which one considers no other consideration higher than it, adhering to which one is not moved in the greatest misery,—such state should be understood to be called *Yoga*. In it there is a complete severance of all connections with pain."

"Such *Yoga* should be practised with steadiness and with an undesponding heart. Abandoning without exception all desires that are produced from resolves, and restraining by mind the entire group of senses, one should by slow

his friend, and his own self is also his enemy. He who has subjugated his self has made his self his friend ; but he who has not subjugated his self has made his self his enemy. He who has controlled his self and has become free from passions has his self unmoved in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. He has truly attained to *Yoga* whose self is content with Knowledge and Special Knowledge, who is unmoved in everything, who has conquered his senses and to whom clay, stone and gold are all alike. That *Yogee* is distinguished* who considers alike his well-wishers, friends, and enemies, those that are indifferent, and those look to the good of

degrees cease to think the objects of senses with the help of his understanding. The restless and unsteady mind always wants to stray away, but one should always restrain it and fix it steadily on the Self alone. To such a *Yogee* whose mind is in peace, whose passions have been suppressed, who has become one with Brahma and who has become free from sins, highest felicity comes by itself."

We have not put the above in the text, because, as our readers will find, Krishna gave preference to "Yoga of performing worldly duties" over this "Yoga of concentration of mind."

* The words are *Jnana* and *Bijñana*,—see our note in page 313.

both parties,—namely those that are objects of hatred and those that are wicked. The *Yogee* looks to every thing with equal eyes. He sees his own self in every creature and every creature in his own self.”

“He who sees me in every thing and everything in me never loses sight of me, and I too never lose sight of him. That *Yogee* who worships me considering that I live in all creatures and that all is but One, lives in me, though he performs all worldly actions. That *Yogee*, who looks to all creatures as if they are his own self, and their pain and pleasures as his own, is considered to be the best.”*

* Our readers now find that Krishna prefers a man who performs his duties to a man who sits deep in concentration of mind. But he puts down some very hard conditions in a man's performing his duties. We believe our readers will not be required to be told what they are. A man must perform all his worldly duties, but without any attachment, desire, wrath or fear, or any passions whatsoever. He must abandon every desire to obtain any fruits or results from the actions performed by him. He must look to every thing with an equal eye, and so forth. This is not an easy matter ; our readers will find exactly the same thing occurred to Arjuna. He asked Krishna how this can be achieved, and Krishna told him the means.

"I cannot see," said Arjuna, "how this *Yoga* based on Equanimity,* which you have told me, can have a continual existence on account of the restlessness of the mind. Mind is fickle, boisterous, perverse and obstinate, and I think it is as difficult to restrain it as the wind."

"The mind," replied Krishna, "is no doubt difficult to be restrained ; no doubt it is restless, but with constant practice and with the adandonment of desire,† it can be brought under control. It is my opinion that *Yoga* is difficult to be achieved by one who has not restrained his mind. But it can be achieved by proper expedients‡

* See our note in page 329.

† The words are *Avyasa* and *Vairagya*.—*Avyasa* is "practice." If one continually tries and practises to control his mind, he can be successful in time. In addition to repeated attempts, he must also abandon all attachments and desires for all objects. *Vairagya* means complete want of attachment for any wordly object.

‡ The word is *Upayata*. It means "with expedients," "with diverse means &c." The various commentators have mentioned various matters in connection with this word. Some say, these expedients are "sacrifices and other religious rites ;" others say, they refer to the various processes of *Yoga* (austerities) as declared by Patanjali, such as *pranayama* &c. We believe "culture, education, mental discipline &c."

with assiduousness by one who has controlled his mind.”*

“What is the end of him, O Krishna,” asked Arjuna, “who is not a *Yogee*, whose mind has been shaken off from *Yoga*, and who has not earned success in *Yoga*,—though he is full of reverence and faith? Deluded from the path to Brahma, being without support, and having fallen from both, would he go to ruin like a broken cloud? You should entirely remove my these doubts. There is none else who can do it.”

“Neither in this world,” replied Krishna, “nor in the next such a man is ruined. None who performs good deeds comes to an evil end. He who has not been able to achieve *Yoga* goes to the region of men of pious deeds. He lives happily there for many years and is then born in the family of rich and virtuous men. He is born in the family of intelligent *Yogees*. Such births

of the modern philosophers are as good expedients to bring the mind under control as any other.

* Whatever be the case there is no question that such *Yoga* is not easy to acquire. What would be the fate of those who would not be able to achieve it? Our readers will find Arjuna asks the very question, and Krishna answers “God is for all.”

as these are difficult to get in this world.* Here in these births he comes in contact with the knowledge of Brahma which belonged to him in former births. He then makes greater attempt to achieve Emancipation. Even though unwilling, he is led to work for Emancipation on account of his dovotional practice in his former births. Even one who is but an enquirer of *Yoga* goes beyond Vedas."†

"By continuously working with assiduity, a *Yogee*, after all his sins being cleared off, obtains the final success and reaches the supreme goal

* We need not tell our readers that "the doctrine of rebirths" is one of the main features of the Hindu religion. In fact its whole structure stands upon it.

We find Krishna believed in rebirths. He repeatedly said man cannot but act impelled by Nature. These acts produce some results : the result of these results is rebirths.

Whether rebirths are possible is a question which we need not answer here. It is a big question, and this is not the place nor the time to enter into such a big controversy. If our readers take the trouble to *study* the Gita, we believe they will have no very great difficulty to find out whether rebirths are possible in human life or this birth is its first and its last.

† The Vedas promise heaven, wealth, powers &c. He who is an enquirer of *Yoga*.—not to speak of a *Yogee*,—gets much more than what the Vedas promise.

after many births. A *Yogee* is superior to a *Tapaswi*; he is superior to a man of true knowledge; he is superior to a *Karmi*; therefore, O Arjuna, become a *Yogee*.* But even amongst all the *Yogees*, he whose self is deep in me, he who worships me with faith and reverence, is in my opinion the highest *Yogee*."†

* The word *Tapashwi* has various significations. We believe here it means a man who is engaged in deep meditation of Brahma.

The word *Jnani* we have translated by "a man of true knowledge." *Karmi* literally means "a man who performs actions." We believe the word here means "a man who performs religious rites, sacrifices &c." Three classes of religious men there were in ancient India, namely (1) *Tapashwi* (a man who meditates on Brahma) (2) *Jnani* (a man of knowledge) and *Karmi* (a man of action). Krishna gives a higher place to a *Yogee* than he gives to any of these three. We need not say, he means by a *Yogee* "the man who performs his duties without attachment and without the least desire to obtain their fruits."

Our readers will find he gives the highest place to a man of faith, love and devotion.

† In the 12th chapter, the Gita, which is called *Bhakti Yoga*, Krishna explains what he means by the above *sloka*. There he explains whom he called a man of faith, love and devotion. We shall quote the passage in full; and we shall particularly ask our readers to read this passage, for in our humble opinion, nothing could be grander.

The Gita, chapter XII., slokas 1—20 say :—

Arjuna said ;—“Of the two classes of your worshippers those who adore you with love, devotion and faith, being always deep in you, and those who meditate on you as imperishable and unmanifest, who are the best *Yogees* ?”

The Great One said :—“He who is always deep in me, whose mind is firmly fixed on me and who always worships me with faith, devotion and love is, in my opinion, the highest *Yogee*. Those who, restraining the entire group of their senses, being equal-minded in respect of all things and performing good to all creatures, worship the Imperishable, the Unmanifest, the All-pervading, the Indifferent, the Immutable, the Eternal, also come to me. But greater is the difficulty to obtain me to those who seek for the Unmanifest ; for the way to the Unmanifest is hard to find by men. I become without delay the deliverer from the ocean of this world of those who repose all actions on me, who is deep in me, who worships me meditating on me with exclusive devotion and who has fixed his mind in me. Therefore fix your mind on me alone ; fix your understanding also in me. There is not the least doubt you will then live in me after death.”

If however, O Arjuna, you are unable of fixing your mind on me, then try to attain to me by continual practice.

If you are unable to try to get me by continual practice, then perform my works making it your highest aim. You will obtain final success by simply performing my works.

If you are unable to do even this, be then self-restrained, abandon all desires to obtain fruits from actions, and have deep devotion in me.

Knowledge is superior to Practice ; Meditation is superior to Knowledge ; Abandonment of the desire to obtain fruits from action is superior to Meditation. Peace is the result of such abandonment.

“He is dear to me, he is my devotee, who has no hatred for any thing, who is friendly and compassionate, who is free from egoism who has no vanity, who is alike in pleasure and pain, who is forgiving, contented and always devoted, whose self is subdued, purpose is firm, and mind and understanding fixed on me. He is dear to me who is not troubled by the world, and the world is not troubled by him, and who is free from joy, fear and anxieties. He is dear to me, he is my devotee who is pure, diligent, unconcerned and free from all diseases and distress, and desireless of the fruits of actions. He is dear to me who has no joy and no aversion, who neither grieves nor desires, who renounces both good and evil, and who is full of faith and devotion. He is dear to me who is alike to friend and foe, in honour and dishonour, in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain and who is free from all attachments. He is dear to me who is taciturn, who is contented with any thing that comes to him, who is homeless, steady-minded, full of faith and to whom censure and praise are the same. Those that follow this religion of immorality which I declare to you,—those of my devotees who are full of faith and love and who consider *me* all, are the dearest to me of all.”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SUPREME ONE

“Hear, O Arjuna,” continued Krishna, “how you can know me by fixing your mind on me, by taking refuge in me and practising *Yoga*.* I shall

* The chapters seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth deal with (1) The Nature of the Supreme one, (2) His Emanations and (3) His Worship. As we have already said, the first is called the “*Yoga* of Knowledge and Special Knowledge” the second “the *Yoga* of Imperishable Brahma,” the third “the “*Yoga* of the king of mystery and knowledge,” and the fourth “the *Yoga* of great Emanations.” The seventh chapter in fact contains all that has been elaborately dealt with in the three following chapters. The 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters might be called explanatory of the 7th. It first deals with the Nature of the Supreme One from 1—7 slokas. From 8—11 it speaks of the Supreme One’s emanations, and from 12—28 it points out the way of worshipping the Great One. The almost whole of the eighth chapter speaks of the Nature of the Great Brahma and how to attain to him. We have, therefore, put it as an explanatory foot-note of the first portion of the seventh chapter. The whole of the ninth chapter deals with the worship of the Supreme One. We have put it in continuation of that portion of the seventh chapter in which worship has been dealt with. The whole of the tenth chapter describes the great emanations of God. We have thought it

now exhaustively tell you the Knowledge with Special Knowledge. Knowing this there will remain nothing more for you to know in this world."

"One only among thousands of men tries to get final success.* Even among those that have achieved perfection with assiduousness, a very few only know me truly."

"Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, understanding and consciousness :—thus my Nature is divided eightfold. But this is a lower form of my Nature. Know there is another form of my Nature higher than this, which is animate,† and by which the universe is upheld. Know all creatures have arisen from my these two natures. I am the productive cause and the destructive agent of all the universe.‡ There is nothing higher than

better to give it full in the text, putting as foot-note that portion of the seventh chapter which deals with emanations.

* The word *Siddha* we translate by "Final Success." It means "the success in obtaining final emancipation and in attaining to Brahma."

† The word is *Jibavutan*=Being in life.

‡ In chapter ninth Krishna manifests to Arjuna his fearful appearance as the *Kala*, the destructive agent of the universe.

destroyed

myself. All this is woven in me like a row of pearls in a string.”*

“The whole universe is pervaded by me in my unmanifest form.† All things rest in me, but I do not rest in them. And again all things are not in me. Look at my divine power.‡ I support all entities, and I am the protector of all entities. As the great and all-occupying air always lives in the sky (without having any touch with it), so similarly do all entities live in me. All creatures attain to my Nature at the end of a *Kalpa*,§ and again at the beginning of a *Kalpa*, I bring them forth. Resting on my own Nature, I again and again bring forth the whole assemblage of entities who are bound to perform actions impelled by Nature. But these acts of mine do not fetter me. I sit unconcerned and unattached to these actions.

* We would specially ask our readers to mark this most beautiful simile.

† This portion is quoted from the 9th chapter, slokas 4—10.

‡ The word is *Yogamaishwaram* = The wealth of *Yoga*.

§ *Kalpa* is a space of time during which this universe exists in its manifest form and at the end of which it disappears into the unknowable Supreme One.

Under my superme control, Nature gives birth to all the movables."*

"Know all existing things of *Salwa*, *Raja* and *Tama* are from me,† but I am not in them. All the universe is deluded by this three qualities. Therefore the creatures know me not who am beyond them and undecaying. This supernatural‡ Illusion of mine,§ the result of the three qualities, is difficult to transcend. The doers of evils, the ignorant men, the worst of men, those whose knowledge has been stolen by Illusion, and those that are demoniac, do not obtain me."||

"O Arjuna, listen again to my words relating to the great Self.¶ I tell them to you out of a wish for your welfare. You too will be delighted with them. The hosts of celestials and the great Rishis do not know my origin. I am the source

Here ends the quotation from the ninth chapter.

† This is a quotation from the chapter VII., slokas 12—15.

‡ The word *Daibi* we have translated by "supernatural." It means "celestial," "relating to the Devas *i. e.* Gods, &c."

§ *Maya*.

|| Here ends the quotation from the chapter VII.

¶ This is a quotation from the 10th chapter, slokas 1—10.

of all the celestials and the Rishis. He, who knows me to be unborn, free from delusion, without beginning, the Supreme Lord of all the world, is released from sins. Intelligence, knowledge, absence from delusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, tranquility, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, security, harmlessness, equanimity of mind, contentment, meditation, gifts, fame and infamy,—all these attributes of beings arise from me alone. He who knows correctly these emanations and mystic powers of mine, undoubtedly attains to unswerving *Yoga*. The truly wise men, endued with my nature, worship me believing that I am the origin of all and from me all things proceed. Such men, placing their minds on me, devoting their lives to me, instructing one another and speaking about me, are always contented and happy. To such men as are always in me and as adore me with faith and devotion I give the Yoga of Knowledge, by which they obtain me. Out of wish for their welfare I, remaining in their heart, destroy the darkness of ignorance with the lamp of knowledge.”*

* We shall here quote some portion of the 8th chapter. It deals with the nature of the Supreme One and how to

attain to him. We would ask our readers to read the portion in the Gita.

“ He who, possessing concentration of mind in continuous meditation, thinks of the Supreme Divine Being with a mind not running to other objects goes to the Supreme Being. He who, possessed of reverence and faith for him, with a steady mind and power of devotion, properly concentrating the life-breaths between the brows, meditates on the ancient Seer, the ruler of all the minutes of the minute, the supporter of all, whose form is inconceivable, whose brilliance is that of the sun and who is beyond all darkness attains to that transcendent divine Being. I shall briefly tell you of Him whom the Veda-knowing men call imperishable, into whom the ascetics without desires enter, and to whom to reach men follow the path of *Brahmacharis*. He reaches the highest goal who casts off his body and departs, stopping all passages (his senses), confining his mind within himself, placing his life-breaths within the eye-brows, adhering to uninterrupted meditation, uttering the one syllable *Om* which is Brahma and meditating on me. To that *Yogee* I am easy of access who always meditates on me by withdrawing his mind from all other objects and who constantly practises abstraction. Those high-souled men who achieve the highest perfection attaining to me do not again take birth which is the abode of sorrow, &c.”

CHAPTER XXV

HIS WORSHIP

“FOUR classes,” continued Kaishna, “of doers of good deeds worship me, namely, (a) one who is in distress, (b) one who is a seeker after knowledge, (c) one who desires wealth, and (d) one who possesses knowledge.* Amongst these four classes of men, the man of knowledge, who is solely devoted to me and who always lives in me, is the best. I am exceedingly dear to a man of knowledge, and he is also very dear to me. All these four classes of men are great, and in my opinion a man of knowledge is like my own Self, for he, being fully devoted to me, rests on me who am the highest and the best goal. A man of knowledge reaches me after many births, considering that Vasudeva† is all. But such high-souled men are exceedingly rare.”

* This chapter contains quotations from the slokas 16—28, chapter VII., and from slokas 11—34, chapter VIII., Gita.

† We need not perhaps tell our readers that Vasudeva is one of the names of Krishna. Here of course it refers to the Supreme One.

"Those, whose knowledge is stolen by various desires, observing various regulations,* worship other gods, impelled as they are by their own nature. Whichsoever different forms of deities a devotee worships with faith and reverence, I make his faith steady and firm in that form. Endued with such firm faith a devotee adores the deity in that form and obtains from him all that he desires, though they are really given by me. But the fruits thus obtained by men of little knowledge are transient. These men consider me manifest,† not knowing my eternal, most excellent and transcendent state. I am not manifest to all, shrouded as I am by my power of Illusion.‡ This ignorant world knows not me who am unborn and undecaying. I know, O Arjuna, things that are passed, things that are present, and things

* The word is *Niyaman*. It refers to the various vows, sacrifices, rites &c, performed by the ancient Aryans with the purpose of obtaining wealth, power &c. in this life and heaven and celestial pleasures in the next. We need not say it refers to the religion and religious rites then extant.

† The word is *Byaktimāpanna*. It literally means "in the form of man." We believe here it is used in a general sense ; therefore we have translated it by "manifest."

‡ The word is *Yoga-maya*. We have translated it by "power of Illusion."

that will be in the future. But there is none who knows me. From the pairs of opposites and from the results of desire and aversion, all beings are deluded.* But those doers of good deeds whose sins are destroyed, being freed from the pairs of opposites and becoming firm in faith, worship me.”†

* The pairs of opposites,—heat and cold, pleasure and pain &c. The passage means that as man is liable to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and as he is full of desire and aversion,—he is not in a position to know God. He is ruled by his mind and senses ;—so long he is not able to rise above their influences, he will be unable to attain to the Supreme.

† Just after this Krishna adds,—“Those who, depending on me, try to obtain release from decay and death, know Brahma, the entire *Adhyatman* and all *Actions*. They, who know me with *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva* and *Adhijajna*, their mind fixed in abstraction, know me at the time of their departure from this world.” The Gita, chapter VII, slokas 29—30.

“What is Brahma,” asked Arjuna, “what is *Adhyatman*, and what is *Action*? And what is meant by *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva* and *Adhijajna*? How do they exist in this body?”

“Brahma is the Supreme and indestructible One,” replied Krishna, “*Adhyatman* is His manifestation (Nature); the birth and the gradual growth of all beings and all God’s works are *Actions*. The mortal state of beings is *Adhibhuta*; *Purusha* (Brahma) is *Adhidaiva*, and I myself is *Adhijajna*.” The Gita, chapter VIII., slokas 3—4.

“He, who abandons his body remembering me at the last moment, undoubtedly comes to my essence. Whichever essences one remembers and ponders upon when one leaves this body and departs from this world, to that essence he goes on account of his habitual meditation upon it.* Therefore remember me at all times, and engage in battle.† Fixing your mind and understanding on me you will surely come to me.”‡

“Not knowing my Supreme Nature, the foolish people of vain hopes, vain acts and vain knowledge, of confounded minds, of the delusive nature of *Asuras* and *Raksasas*,§ insult me when I am in the human body.”||

* Whatever one always meditates and ponders upon he becomes that in his after-life. Whatever deity one adores he goes to that deity.

† If you always meditate upon God, you have no fear in death, for if you die in the battle, you would then go to Him. “Therefore,” Krishna says, “Arise and fight.”

‡ This portion is a quotation from the Gita, chapter VIII., slokas 5—7.

§ The *Asuras* and *Raksasas* are demoniac beings. The character of a man of an *Asura* nature is the result of *Tama* quality and that of *Raksasa* nature is the result of *Raja* quality.

|| The word is *Manushin Tanuasritam*, literally, “resting in the body of man.” This passage is variously explained ;

"But the high-souled and divine-natured devotees, knowing me as the origin of all things, worship me with mind directed to nothing else. Some always glorifying me, some having firm vows, some bowing down to me with reverence, some being always devoted to me,—thus do they worship me. Others again, performing the sacrifice of knowledge, worship me as One ; some as distinct, and some again as pervading the universe in many forms.'"

"Those, who know the three Knowledges,† who drink the *Soma* juice,‡ who offer sacrifices and whose sins are washed away, seek admission

many saying that it refers to Krishna as a man and as a Vrisni prince. They say it means "that people not knowing who Krishna really was insult him."

In our humble opinion the passage bears a general sense. It means that not knowing that God lives as Soul or Self in every man, people disregard their own bodies and souls. If people know that God is in him as well as in every man, they would have loved, respected and adored their own bodies and souls as well as those of all other men.

* This is a description of the various religious methods and rites and forms that were extant in ancient India.

† Three "knowledges" here refer to the three Vedas, i. e. *Rik, Yaju and Saman*.

‡ *Soma* is a creeper. A sort of intoxicating beverage was made by the ancient Aryans from the *Soma* juice.

into heaven. Reaching the holy world of the Lord of the celestials, they enjoy the celestial pleasures of the gods in the celestial region. Having enjoyed the pleasures of the extensive heaven, they again come to this mortal world, when their virtues are exhausted. Thus the followers of the Vedas and the men of desires again and again take their births on this earth.”*

“I bestow *Yoga-Kshema*† on those men who worship me alone without adoring any other deities, who meditate upon me, and who always dwell in me. But those devotees who worship with faith other gods also worship me, though not in the regular form ; for I am the enjoyer as well as the giver of fruits of all sacrifices. But as these devotees do not truly know me, so have they to come back again and again in the world.‡ Those

* The word is *Gatagatam*, literally “going and coming.”

† It is rather difficult to translate the word *Yoga-Kshema*. It means “the final results of *Yoga*.” Some commentators say, it means “*Samadhi* and its permanent existence which is final emancipation.”

‡ Krishna means to say, “whomsoever one worships, he worships me, for I am everything,—nay every God. But though I bestow upon them wealth, pleasures &c. in this life, and heaven and other happy states in the next for thus worshipping various gods, yet they are to take births again

that worship the Devas go to the Devas,* those that worship the *Pitris* go to the *Pitris* ;† those that worship the *Bhutas* go to the *Bhutas*,‡ but those who worship *Me* come to me. I accept even leaves, flowers, fruits, and water from him who offers them with faith and devotion, for they are offered with faith by that man only who is self-restrained. Whatever you do, O Arjuna, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever meditation you perform, do it in such a way as it may be an offering to me. Thus will you be freed from the bonds of actions, the fruits of which are both good and evil. Thus imbued with *Sannyasa* and *Yoga*, you will be freed from the bonds of re-births ; you will then come to me."

"I am alike to all beings ; none is hateful,—none is dear to me. He who worships me with devotion is mine, and I am his. If even an exceedingly wicked man worships me with sole

and again, for they do not obtain emancipation as they do not worship me."

* Devas—celestials.

† Pitris—the dead ancestors.

‡ Bhutas—Spirits.

devotion,* he should certainly be considered pious, for his efforts are well-directed. Such a man soon becomes virtuous and obtains ever-lasting Peace. Know, Arjuna, my devotee is never lost."

"Even those persons, who are of sinful birth, who are women, who are *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*,† attain to the Supreme if they take my protection. When such is the case, what should I speak of holy Brahmans and royal sages who are my devotees? Having come to this miserable and mortal world, worship me.‡ Fix your mind on me, become my worshipper, become my devotee, bow to me.§ Thus depending on me and mixing your mind with me, you will certainly obtain me."||

* The word is *Mamanyavak*.

† We need not tell our readers that in the Hindu society women, *Vaisyas* (agriculturists and artisans) and *Sudras*, (servants) held in all religious matters a very low position. But we are afraid such was not the case when Krishna was born. As we have said in the Introduction, it was a later innovation.

‡ What could be a better work than this?

§ We shall ask our readers to read carefully the whole of this chapter. Is not every line of it an invaluable gem in religious, ethical, and moral instruction?

|| As in the Mahavarata, so in the 11th Book of the

Vagavata, Krishna delivers a long lecture on Religion. It is a conversation between Uddhava, a devotee of Krishna, and Krishna himself, occupying no less than fourteen long chapters.

We have not dwelt upon it, for it is nothing but a learned, very learned commentary on the Gita itself. It is exactly like any other of the numerous learned commentaries of this wonderful work. We quote two *slokas* from its last chapter. They will show that the 11th Book of the Vagavata only elaborately explains what the Gita says.

The Vagavata, Book XI., sloka 1, says :—Uddhava asked, ‘It is difficult for him who has not been able to control his mind to attain to such *Yoga*. Therefore tell me how a man can easily obtain success?’ Krishna thus concludes his teachings. The Vagavata, Book XI., sloka 34 says, “When a man, after abandoning the desire of obtaining fruits in actions, engages himself in performing *My* works, he then, achieving immortality, becomes fit to be *one* with me.”

These are almost quotations from the Gita.

CHAPTER XXVI

HIS EMANATIONS

“YOU are the Supreme Brahma,” said Arjuna
“the Supreme asylum, the holiest of the holy,
the ever-lasting divine Being, the first of gods
unborn, the great Lord.* All the Rishis as well

* To many of our readers this chapter would appear more poetical than historical. Perhaps the same remark would be made as regards the next chapter also. We admit, the chapters X and XI of the Gita appear in the face of them poetical, but at the same time we humbly beg to state that they cannot be thoroughly poetical, having not the least historical value in them. After hearing all that Krishna spoke to Arjuna, it would be very natural for him to ask what are the *particular* emanations of God in this world, though He is everything and in everything. If we accept the first portion of the Gita as historical, we can by no means reject these two chapters as unhistorical. In finding out historical facts from events that happened some three thousand years ago and from descriptions that were penned at least two thousand years ago, we must take that only as fact which appears natural and which has the appearance of being true. If the first portion of the Gita or something akin to it was really spoken to Arjuna, as we have ventured to say it was, then it is natural that Arjuna should be eager to know the *particular* emanations of God in this world. It is also natural that he should then be eager to see the Great Form

as the celestial sages,—Narada, Asita, Devala,*—say so. So do you tell me that it is so. I believe all that you tell me. Neither the Devas nor the Danavas† understand your manifestations. O Best of beings, O Creator of all things, O Lord of all, God of all gods, the Ruler of the universe, you yourself only know you by your great Self.”

“Tell me, O Lord, your divine emanations by which you remain pervading all these worlds. O Lord of mystic powers, how shall I know you

of the Supreme One that lies behind this universe which is His manifested form. In fact if we drop chapters X and XI of the Gita, it becomes incomplete.

We need not tell our readers the whole of this chapter is a gem in literature.

* These are three great *Rishis*. We have very little historical facts to narrate about them.

† The Devas and the Danavas are said to be the descendants of two sisters *Diti* and *Aditi*. The sons of *Diti* are the Danavas and of *Aditi* the Devas. The Devas and the Danavas might be translated as the “celestials” and the “Demons.” Formerly they lived in amity, but when they churned the great ocean to produce ambrosia, they fell out; for the Devas drank up the whole of ambrosia by a stratagem. The Danavas were thus made mortals, whereas the Devas became immortals. From that day a great feud raged between them; sometimes the Danavas becoming victorious and sometimes the Devas. The whole of the Hindu mythology is full of the descriptions of these wars.

by always meditating on you ? In what particular manifestations of yours should I meditate on you ? O exalted One, declare to me in detail your powers and emanations,* for I am not yet satiated with having tasted this ambrosia."

"O Arjuna," replied Krishna, "I shall tell you my divine emanations, but I shall only mention the chief ones, for there is no end of my emanations."

"I am the Self in the body of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of every thing. I am *Vishnu* amongst the *Adityas*,† the all resplendent sun amongst all shining bodies. I am *Marichi* amongst *Marutas*‡ and the moon among all constellations. I am the *Sama Veda* amongst the Vedas,§ I am Mind amongst the senses and consciousness in all living things. I

* The words are *Yoga* and *Bivuti*.

† *Aditya* means "sun." Here it means a certain order of celestials. *Vishnu* is one of the Hindu Trinity,—the protector of the world

‡ *Maruta* is the wind. Here it means a certain order of celestials. *Marichi* is the chief of the *Marutas*.

§ We need not tell our readers that *Sama* is one of the three Vedas.

am *Sanker* amongst the *Rudras*,* *Varuna* amongst the *Yakshas*,† *Pavaka* amongst the *Vasus*,‡ and *Meru* amongst all mountain peaks.”§

“ Know me to be *Vrihaspati* amongst the chief priests|| and *Skanda* amongst all commanders of forces.¶ I am ocean amongst all waters. I am *Vrigu* among all great Rishis,§ *Om* among all words,** *Japjajna* among all sacrifices†† and *Himalaya* among all mountains. I am the Fig-tree among all trees; *Narada* among all celestial

* The *Rudras* are also a certain order of celestials. *Sankara*, i. e., *Siva*, one of the Hindu Trinity,—the destroyer.

† *Yakshas* are a certain order of beings lower than the celestials and higher than man. They are supposed to be the lords of wealth. *Varuna* is their chief and king.

‡ *Vasus* are a certain order of celestials,—*Pavaka* is their chief. *Pavaka* means “ fire.”

§ According to the ancient geographers of India, Mount *Meru* is the highest peak in the world.

|| *Vrihaspati* is the preceptor as well as the chief priest of the celestials.

¶ *Skanda* is *Kartikeya*, the son of *Siva* and *Durga*. He is the generalissimo of the celestial army.

§ *Vrigu* was a very great sage.

** *Om* is the most sacred word of the Hindus. They believe the word to be *Brahma* himself.

†† *Japajajna* is the sacrifice of reciting the name of God.

Rishis, *Chitraratha* among all *Gandharvas*.*
Kasipa among all *Siddhas*.”†

“ Know me to be *Ugrasrava* among all horses‡
 and *Airavata* among all elephants.§ I am *Vajra*
 among all weapons.|| I am *Kamadhanu* amongst
 the cows.¶ I am *Kandarpa* that generates.”§

“ I am *Vasuki* among serpents, *Ananta* among
 all the *Nagas*,** *Varuna* among all aquatic

* The *Gandharvas* are an order of beings lower than the celestials but higher than man. They are said to be very handsome and highly proficient in music. *Chitraratha* is their king.

† *Siddhas* are those who have become successful in obtaining final emancipation.

‡ *Ugrasrava* is the horse that was obtained by the celestials at the time of the churning of the ocean.

§ *Airavata* was the elephant that the lord of the celestials got by churning the ocean.

|| Thunder or *Vajra* is the weapon of Indra.

¶ *Kamadhanu* is the celestial cow,—supposed to give milk whenever asked.

§ *Kandarpa* is the God of Love.

** *Vasuki* is the king of snakes. We would refer our readers to our note Part, I. pg. 6. The *Nagas* &c were not snakes ;—sometime they are described as beings lower than the celestials but higher than man,—sometimes again they are described as beings lower than man. *Ananta* is the chief of the *Nagas*.

beings.* I am *Aryamana* among the *Putras* and *Yama* among all that dispense justice and punishment.† I am *Prahlada* among the *Daityas*,§ and *Kala* among all that count.|| I am lion among all beasts of prey and *Garuda* among the birds.¶ I am wind among those that

* Varuna is the king of all aquatic creatures. He is supposed to be one of the gods. Time was when he was the chief god of the ancient Aryans. See note in Part. I. pg. 55.

† *Aryamana* was a Rishi.

‡ *Yama* is the god of death. He is also the dispenser of justice and punishment in the universe.

§ The *Daityas* and the *Danavas* are the same. *Prahlada* was the son of *Hirannyakashipu*, a great *Danava* king. But he became a great devotee of *Vishnu*. His father made various attempts to kill him, but *Prahlada* escaped through his great devotion to *Vishnu*. At last his irascible father brought him before him and questioned him about *Vishnu*. The boy said he was everywhere and in everything. The wrathful *Danava* cried, "Is he here in this pillar?" "Yes, he is," replied the boy. The king struck the pillar with all his might, and instantly issued from it a fearful figure with a human body but a lion's head. He killed the *Danava* then and there. This is said to be one of the incarnations of *Vishnu*, called *Narasingha*. The story of *Prahlada* is to be found almost in all *Puranas*.

|| *Kala* is time.

¶ *Garuda* is the king of birds. The god *Vishnu* is said to ride on it.

move, Rama among all wielders of weapons.* I am *Makara* among the fishes† and the Ganges among all rivers.”

“ I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all created things ; I am the knowledge of the Supreme ; *Om* among all kinds of knowledge. I am the Argument of all debaters. I am the first letter of the alphabet, I am the *Danda* among all *Samasas*,‡ I am the eternal Time ; I am the creator of the universe. I am the source of all that is to be. I am the all-destroying Death among all destroyers.”

“ Among females, I am Fame, Fortune, Speech, Memory, and Meters.§ I am *Margasirsha* among months|| and flowery Spring among the seasons. I am the dice-game among all cheating acts. I am

* Rama here most likely refers to Parashu Rama, the son of Jamadagni. He is said to have exterminated the Kshatriya race twenty-one times. We are sorry we cannot agree with Telang in this matter.

† Makara is a big fish,—something like a shark.

‡ *Samasas* are the “copulatives” of the Sanskrit Grammar. *Danda* is one of the *Samasas*.

§ All these in Sanskrit are in the feminine gender.

|| *Margasirsha* or *Magha* is the name of a month,—it is January and February.

the might of the mighty ; I am victory, I am industry, I am the goodness of the good. I am Vasudeva among the Vrisnis,* and Arjuna amongst the Pandavas. I am Vyasa among the *Rishis* and *Ushanas* among the Seers.”†

“I am the rod of the chastisers ;‡ I am the policy of those that seek victory. I am silence in all secrets, and knowledge in all the learned. I am, O Arjuna, that which is the seed of all things. There is nothing movables and immovables which can exist without me.”

“There is no end of my divine emanations. O Arjuna, I tell you only a part of my endless emanations. Whatever there is of power, of glory, of splendour,—know them all produced from a portion of my energy. But, O Arjuna,

* Vasudeva is Krishna, and the Vrisnis are a clan of the Yadava race.

† We may mention here that if Buddhism, Christianity, Mohammedanism and other religions were extant when Krishna uttered these wonderful words, he would have surely added,—“I am Gautama Buddha amongst the Buddhists ; I am Jesus amongst the Christians : I am Mohammed amongst the Mohammedans &c.”

‡ “Chastisers” here means those whose duty is to inflict punishments in this world.

what have you to do with the knowledge of all this in detail ? Know, I stand, supporting this entire universe with but a portion of myself."*

* We shall now quote the other passages in which Krishna speaks of the emanations of God. The Gita, chap. VII, *Slokas* 8—11 say :— "I am the *taste* in water, I am the *light* in the sun and moon, I am *Om* in all the Vedas, the *sound* in space and *manliness* in man. I am the *fragrance* on earth, the *refulgence* in fire ; I am the *life* in all beings, and the *penance* in ascetics. Know me to be ever-lasting *Seed* of all beings ; I am the *intelligence* of all intelligent men and *glory* of all glorious objects. I am the *strength* of the strong who are freed from desire and thirst. I am the *love* among all beings."

The Gita chap. IX, *Slokas* 16—19 say :—"I am the Vedic sacrifice. I am the sacrifice laid down in the *Smriti* (Hindu religious Books). I am the *Sabda* (mantra), I am the libation, I am the fire, and I am also the offerings of a sacrifice. I am the father of this universe, its mother, its creator, its grand-sire. I am the thing to be and the means by which every thing is purified."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GREAT MANIFESTATION

“THE excellent and mysterious words,” said Arjuna, “which you have told me about the Supreme Self and the Individual Self* have removed my delusion. I have heard from you in detail the Mystery of Production and Dissolution of Things, I have heard about your inexhaustible Greatness.”

“O great Lord, what you have said about you is perfectly true. But, O highest of all things, I desire to see your Divine Form. If, O Lord, you think that I am competent to see that Form of yours, then, O Lord, show me your inexhaustible Form.”

“Behold, Partha,” replied Krishna, “my *Forms* by hundreds and thousands. They are various, divine, and different in colour and form.† Behold,

* The word is *Adhyatmasangitam*, literally “Knowledge of the Supreme Self in relation to the Individual (human) Self or Soul.”

† Here is a *sloka* we have dropped considering it unimportant.

Arjuna, the entire universe of movables and immovables and whatever else you wish to see all collected in my this body. But you are not fit to see me in my Divine Form with your these eyes. Therefore I give you divine sight. Behold now my great Mystic Form.”*

Having said this, the mighty Lord of Mystic Powers,† Hari,‡ revealed to Arjuna his great Divine Form.§

No pen can describe what Arjuna saw. No pen can paint the feelings that the Pandava prince felt on seeing what none else could ever see.||

* The word is *Yogawasangitam*, literally “divine Yoga powers.” As Krishna bestowed upon Arjuna the divine sight, we have thought it proper to use here the word “the mystic form.”

† The word is *Mahayogeshwara*.

‡ Hari is a name of Vishnu.

§ The word is *Rupamaishwaram*.

|| We are aware that there will be good deal of difference of opinion amongst our readers about this matter. We shall not enter into a controversy over such a crude point such as the possibility of human being's *seeing* the Supreme One. However, if we believe the religious books of the world, we think we are also bound to believe it. Moses saw Him, Jesus saw Him,—not to speak of the Hindu Rishis. It is all a matter of faith and devotion, and no amount of paper discussion will help us in any way in this matter.

He was struck with awe ; he was dumb ; he was fainting ; he trembled from head to foot ; his hair

The Gita attempts to describe what Arjuna saw. It says that he saw the Form of Destruction of the Supreme One. We quote the passage in full for what it is worth. The Gita, chap. XI. slokas 9—34. say :—"O great king, having said this, the mighty Lord of mystic powers, Hari, revealed to Partha his great divine Form. With many mouths and eyes, with many wonderful aspects, with many celestial ornaments, with many upraised celestial weapons, adorned with celestial garlands and robes, embalmed with celestial fragrance, and full of every wonder, it is resplendent and infinite with faces turned on all sides. If the splendour of one thousand suns bursts forth all at once in the sky, that would be something like the splendour of that great One. Then the son of Pandu (Arjuna) saw the entire universe, divided and subdivided into many parts, but all collected together in the body of that God of all gods." "O mighty-armed," said Arjuna, "all creatures are frightened, and seeing also your mighty Form with many mouths and eyes, with innumerable arms, thighs, feet and bellies, and terrible on account of many tusks, I can no longer command courage, or enjoy peace of mind. Seeing your mighty form which is touching the very skies, which is fiery, radiant, many-winged, widely open-mouthed and with large and blazing eyes, seeing your mouth terrible with tusks and fearful as the all-destroying Fire at the final end of the *Yuga*, I cannot recognise the points of the horizon or command my peace of mind. All the sons of Dhritarashtra together with all the host of kings, Bhishma, Drona and Suta's son, Karna with all the principle warriors of our side are all quickly entering your terrible mouths rendered more terrible by their tusks. Some, with their heads crushed,

stood on an end ; he knew not what he saw and what he felt, except that he was in extreme ecstasy.*

stick at the interstices of your teeth. As many currents of waters, flowing through different channels, rolled rapidly into the ocean, so these heroes of the world enter into your blazing mouths. As insects for their own destruction rush in increasing speed into the blazing fire so these men, with unceasing speed, enter into your mouths for their own destruction. Devouring all these men from every side, you lick them with your flaming mouths. O Vishnu, your fearful splendour, filling the whole universe with your great energy, heats everything. Tell me who you are with this fearful form ? I bow down my head to you ; be gracious unto me, O chief of the gods. I desire to know you, Primeval One ; for I do not understand your actions." "I am," said Krishna, "the full manifestation of Death, the destroyer of the worlds. All these warriors, standing in different divisions will cease to be, even if you do not kill them. Therefore, arise and gain glory. Vanquishing the foe, enjoy this great kingdom. All these men are already slain by me ; be my instrument only. Kill Drona, Bhishma, Jayadhratha and Karna and all these brave warriors; they are already killed by me. Do not be dismayed. Fight,—you will surely conquer your foes in battle."

* We give below a free translation of Slokas 36-46, chap XI, Gita. We have, however, dropped the repetitions and unnecessary words.

"Then filled with amazement, Dhananjaya, with his hair standing on an end, his head lowly bowed down, and his palms joined together, addressed the great God thus" :—

"I behold, O great God, all the celestials and all the varied hosts of creatures. I behold *Brahma* seated on his lotus-seat ;

Recovering his power of speech, he fell on his knees and bowed again and again to Krishna. Joining his palms, he then thus addressed to the Highest of the High. "It is quite natural that the universe is delighted in singing your praise. O Infinite One, O God of gods, you are that which *is*, and that which *is not*, and that which *is beyond*

I behold all the great *Rishis* and divine *Nagas*. O you of infinite forms, I behold you on every side with innumerable arms, bellies, mouths and eyes. O Lord of the universe, O you of universal form, I do see neither your end nor middle, nor the beginning. I behold you immeasurable,—you whom it is difficult to look at. I behold you, bearing your diadem, mace and discus glowing in all sides, possessing a mass of energy, and being subdued with the effulgence of the blazing fire of the sun. I behold you, possessing infinite prowess and innumerable arms, having the sun and the moon as your two eyes, and the blazing fire as your mouth; I behold you heating the universe with your own great energy. The space between heaven and earth and all the points of the horizon are pervaded by you alone. The three worlds tremble, O Supreme Self, at the sight of your this marvellous and fierce form. You are imperishable, and the Supreme Object of this universe. You are undecaying and the guardian of ever-lasting virtue. I find you the eternal great Being. Hosts of celestials enter into you; some perhaps being afraid pray with joined hands, saying *Hail to Thee*. Hosts of great *Rishis* and *Siddhas* praise you with innumerable hymns of praise. The *Rudras*, the *Vasus*, the *Aswinas*, the *Marutas*, the *Ushanas*, the *Gandharvas*, the *Rakshasas* the *Asuras* and hosts of *Siddhis* see you; and they are all amazed."

both the existents and non-existents. You are the First God, the Ancient Being. You are the Supreme Refuse of the world. I bow down my head to you a thousand times. Again and yet again I bow down my head to you. My salutation to you in front ; my salutation to you from behind ; my salutation to you from every side. You are all."

"O Krishna, O Yadava, O friend, O Infinite One, I beg your pardon for whatever was carelessly said by me out of love and out of friendship. You are the Father of the universe, you are the great Master. O Lord, prostrating myself before you, I ask your grace. Seeing your this Form unseen before by man, I am delighted,* but my mind has been filled with extreme fear. Show me, O God, your ordinary form. Be gracious."

* In sloka 46, chap. XI., Arjuna says, "Be of your *four-armed* form." We need not say that the God Vishnu, whose incarnation Krishna is said to be, has four arms. Did Arjuna desire to see Krishna's that four-armed *i. e.* Vishnu Form, or did he desire to see his ordinary human form, *i. e.* as the Vrisni prince with two arms ?

In sloka 50 Sanjaya said, "Vasudeva then once more showed him his *own* form." Here the name of Krishna is given as Vasudeva, the son of Basudeva, the Vrisni chief. Therefore, showing his own form cannot mean any thing else but the human form.

“O Arjuna,” replied Krishna, “being pleased with you, I have shown to you, through my mystic powers, this my Supreme Form,—glorious, universal, infinite and primeval.”*

Having said this, Krishna once more showed his own form. “O Krishna,” said Arjuna, “seeing your this gentle human form, I have again come to my right mind and to my normal state.”

“O Arjuna,” replied Krishna, “the Form of mine which you have just now seen is difficult to be seen. Even the celestials are always eager to see my this Great Form. Not by the study of the Vedas, not by penances, gift or sacrifices, can I be seen in this Form of mine which you have seen.”

“But O Arjuna, by undeviating devotion† to me, I can in this Form be known, truly seen and attained to. O Arjuna, he, who is a Worker of

Just in the next sloka 51 we find Arjuna says, “Seeing your this gentle *human-form*.” Here human form is distinctly mentioned, the word being *Manwusan Rupan*. Therefore we humbly think that the word *Chaturbhujana* is here either interpolated or put in the place of another word when Krishna became recognised as an incarnation of Vishnu.

* We have dropped two slokas 48 and 49, being not very important.

† The word is *Ananyaya Bhaktya*.

my Works, who has made me his Supreme Object, who is free from attachments, and who has no enmity towards any creature, attains to me."*

Krishna then thus concluded his great teachings to his friend and pupil. "Mentally dedicating to Me all actions at all times, resorting to mental abstraction, and being fully devoted to Me, fix all your thoughts constantly on Me. Fixing your thoughts on Me, you will surmount all difficulties through My favour. But if from self-conceit you do not listen to Me, you will then surely perish."

"If out of self-conceit you think 'I will not fight,' your this resolution will be in vain ; for surely will Nature rule you. Bound by your own Duty and ordained by Nature, you will involuntarily do that which, out of your mental delusion, you do not want to do. O Arjuna, the Lord, as if mounting on a machine, seats in the heart of all beings and turns them as He pleases by His illusive powers. Therefore, O Arjuna, seek shelter in Him in every way. By his favour you will get the Supreme Peace and the Eternal Seat."

* We need not say "my" or "me" here refers to the Supreme One. This is the key-note of Srikrishna's teachings.

"I have thus, O friend, declared to you the knowledge which is more mysterious than other mysteries. Reflect on it fully, and then act as you like. Once more hear my words,—the most mysterious mystery of all. You are very dear to me, therefore I tell you what is good for you."

"Fix your heart on Me ; become My devotee ; sacrifice to Me ; bow down to Me, —you will then come to me. I tell you truly, for you are very dear to me. Forsaking all religious duties extant, come to Me ; come to Me as your sole refuge. I shall deliver you from all your sins ; do not grieve."*

"My delusion is gone," said Arjuna, "O Lord, through your favour I now know what I am. I am now firm. My doubts have now been dispelled. I will obey you. I will do your bidding."*

* This is a quotation from the last chapter of the Gita, *i.e.* Chap. XVIII, slokas 57—66 and 73.

* We have already said in our previous notes that chap. 12th to the last chapter, *i.e.* 18th of the Gita, all these seven chapters are rather explanatory to the previous eleven chapters. Our readers will find, if they compare our notes on the Gita with a complete Gita, that we have left nothing, but put almost all of these seven chapters, from 12th to 18th, in our notes on chapters 1st to 11th which we give in our text.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GREAT BATTLE

THE auspicious day at last arrived and the great battle began.* From the early dawn of day both armies were astir ; generals ran from divisions to

* We now enter upon the most difficult portion of our task in finding out historical facts from fictions and fables in the life of Srikrishna. The *Parvas* of the Mahavarata that treat of the great battle are full of so many interpolations, contradictory statements, and repetitions that it is almost impossible to find out what was really the original descriptions of this battle as narrated by Vyasa. These *Parvas* are the worst portion of the Mahavarata ; they are so very different from and inferior both in the style and in poesy to the other portions of the Mahavarata that one is almost led to believe that the original description of the battle as written by Vyasa was lost, and some inferior writers in subsequent years re-wrote these accounts of the battle. We, however, after repeatedly going through these pages and after comparing these accounts with those found in other Sanskrit works, have come to some conclusions. We have put down here the results of our researches, and we humbly hope that what we write was the real facts. We need not say we shall mention, as we proceed, what we have rejected and what we have accepted from these accounts of the battle that cover no less than six *Parvas* of the Mahavarata.

divisions arranging their troops ; car-warriors filled their respective chariots with all kinds of offensive and defensive weapons ; elephant-men and horse-men placed themselves in their respective posts ; and foot-soldiers arranged themselves in rows with their clubs, spears and swords upraised.* Drums, trumpets, trombones, and pipes filled the earth with their loud shrilling music.* The sounds of conchs were heard from every part of the field.†

* We shall quote in this chapter and the chapter following a few passages from the Mahavarata to give our readers an idea of the mode in which battles were fought in ancient India.

† Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, chap. I., slokas 20—32 say :—“ Then the Kurus, the Pandavas and the Panchalas made certain agreements and settled some rules regarding different kinds of fight. Men that are equally situated should only fight with one another with all fairness. Those who engage in a battle of words should be fought against with only words. Those that leave the fight should never be killed. A car-warrior should fight only with a car-warrior. He who rides on an elephant should fight only with another such combatant. A horse-man must fight with a horse-man and foot-soldier with a foot-soldier. Always being led by the consideration of fitness, willingness, bravery and strength, one should strike another after having challenged him. None should strike another who is confiding or who is panic-stricken. One fighting with another, one seeking refuge, one retreating, one whose weapon is broken and one who is not clad in armour should never be struck. Charioteers, animals,

The great Bhishma was astir before any body had arisen. He had agreed to be the generalissimo of the Kuru army for ten days. Every body, therefore, knew that the Kuru army and the Kuru princes were safe from the all-destroying arrows of Arjuna and all fearful club of Bhimasena at least for these ten days. The old grand-father of the Kuru race, Bhishma, moved from one part of the field to the other inspecting minutely the arrangements of the army made by the various generals. He placed the various divisions of the army in proper order,—the order in which each deserved to be placed according to the exigencies of the coming battle.

The same was done by Dhristadumna and Bhimasena in the other camp. Each general had hundreds of car-warriors to back him; each car-warrior again was supported by thousands of horse-men and elephant-men. Behind and before and all around, as necessity required, stood innumerable foot-soldiers,—all determined to die or win the battle. Thus according to the fixed rules of war, every thing was arranged and made ready

men engaged in carrying weapons, those who play on drums and those who blow conchs should never be smitten."

by both the contending armies to begin the great battle.*

* We shall here quote only two passages which will give our readers a very fair idea of the Kuru and the Pandava armies on the field of Kurukshetra. Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, chap. XX., slokas 3—20 say :—

“When placed in battle-array, both the armies were equally cheerful. Both the armies looked equally beautiful. They looked like two blossoming woods, and they were full of elephants, cars and horses. Both the armies were huge and fearful. None of them could bear the other. Both of them were arrayed as if they would conquer the very heavens. Both of them consisted of excellent soldiers. The armies of Dhritarashtra's son stood facing the west ; the Pandavas stood facing the east,—all ready for fight. The Kuru troops looked like the army of the Danava chief, while the Pandava troops looked like the army of the celestials. The wind blew from behind the Pandavas. The beasts of prey yelled from behind the troops of your sons. The elephants, belonging to your sons, could not bear the strong odour of the juice emitted by the large (Pandava) elephant.”

“Durjodhana rode on a lotus-complexioned elephant with its temples rent, adorned with a golden *howda* and clad in a steel armour. He was in the very centre of the Kurus. He was being adored by eulogists and bards. A white umbrella, adorned with a golden chain as effulgent as the moon, was held over his head. The ruler of Gandhara, Sakuni, followed him with innumerable mountaineers of Gandhara. The venerable Bhishma was at the head of the army. With a white umbrella held over his head, with a white head-dress (on his head) with a white bow and sword (in his hand), with a white banner (on his car) and with

white horses (yoked to his car), he looked like a great white mountain."

"The illustrious Drona, the preceptor of almost all the kings, with a bow in hand, and with never-failing heart, stationed on a golden car yoked with red horses, remained behind all the troops, thus protecting them like Indra."

"That large force which was well-protected by the great car-warriors of the Vrisci and the Bhoja races and also by the warriors of Saurashtra,—all well-armed and well-skilled in the use of arms,—the force which was under the command of Kritavarmana, marched to the south of your army. Ten thousand *Sansaptaka* car-warriors who were created for either the death or the fame of Arjuna, who were all greatly accomplished in arms, and who intended to follow Arjuna at every step, marched out with the Trigarttas."

"O descendant of Bharata, in your army there were one hundred thousand elephants of the greatest fighting powers. To each elephant was assigned one hundred car-warriors, to each car was assigned one hundred horse-men, to each horse-man, ten bow-men, to each bow-man, ten soldiers armed with shields. Thus, O descendant of Bharata, were your troops placed by Bhishma in battle array."

"On every succeeding morning your generalissimo Bhishma, the son of Santanu, sometimes placed your troops in the human, sometimes in the celestials, sometimes in the Gandharva and sometimes in the Asura *Buhas*. With innumerable great car-warriors roaring like the very ocean, the army of Dhritarashtra's son, arrayed by Bhishma, stood ready for battle, facing the west. O king, your army looked terrible, but the Pandava army appeared to me very large and invincible, for Arjuna and Krishna were its leaders."

Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, chap. XXII., slokas 3—13 say :—"In the centre stood Shikandin and his men protected by Arjuna. Dhristadumna was at the front protected by

Bhima. O king, the southern division of the army was protected by that great bow-man, the handsome Yuyudhana, that foremost of the Satwata heroes, who was equal to Indra himself. Yudhisthira was on a car which was worthy of carrying Indra himself. It was adorned with an excellent standard decked with gold and gems. It was furnished with golden traces. He stood in the midst of his elephant corps. His milk-white umbrella, with ivory handle, held over his head, looked exceedingly beautiful. Many great Rishis walked round the king uttering the words of praise. Many priests, Brahmans, Rishis, Siddhas, as they walked round him, chanted hymns in his praise. They wished the destruction of his enemies by the help of *japas* and *mantras*, efficacious drugs and various propitiatory ceremonies. The illustrious Pandava chief then gave away to the Brahmans kine, fruits, flowers, golden coins and cloths. He marched like Indra, the chief of the celestials."

"Arjuna's car, furnished with hundreds of bells, decked with gold, fitted with excellent wheels, endued with the effulgence of fire and yoked with best steeds, looked as brilliant as one thousand suns. On this grand car, which was driven by Keshava (Krishna), stood the ape-bannered hero with Gandiva (bow) and arrows in his hand,—a great bow-man whose equal there is none on earth or none will be."

"He who assumes the most terrible appearance for crushing your sons, he who without any weapon but only with his bare arms pounds to dust men, horses and elephants, that mighty-armed Bhimasena, that Vrikodara, accompanied by the twins (Nakula and Sahadeva), protected the (Pandava) car-warriors. Seeing the invincible Vrikodara like a fearful lion of sportive gait, like a proud leader of herd of elephants, like the great Indra himself, your soldiers, with their strength weakened by fear, began to tremble like elephants sunk in mud."

We shall now quote the ancient chronicler.* :—

“Thereupon! lion-like roars, clamorous shouts, the blare of cow-horns and the sounds of drums, cymbals, and tabors rose in both the armies. The soldiers of the enemy rushed upon us,† and we also rushed upon them with loud shouts. The vast armies of the Kurus and the Pandavas shook in that fearful and sanguinary battle by the sounds of conchs and cymbals as a forest is shaken by the wind.”

“Then all the brothers, your sons, Durjodhana and others, shaking their bows and taking out long arrows, surrounded that great bow-man Bhima and covered him with a shower of arrows. The sons of Draupadi, the son of Subhadra,—Abhimanyu, Nakula, Sahadeva, Dhristadumna, all rushed against the warriors of Durjodhana’s army and tore them asunder with sharp arrows, as the summits of mountain-peaks are broken down by the thunderbolts.”

* See Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, chapter XLIV, and chapter XLV.

† All these descriptions were given by Sanjaya to the old blind king Dhritarashtra. This portion of the Mahavarata is a dialogue between the Kuru minister Sanjaya and the Kuru king Dhritarashtra.

“Under the command of your son, the warriors at the head of their respective troops rushed upon the enemy. Fearful was the uproar, mingled as it was with the lion-like shouts of the warriors and the fearful din made by the sounds of conchs and drums, and awful noise made by the elephants and horses of the kings rushing to the charge. While fighting or retreating or rallying again, neither the men of our side nor those of the enemies could be distinguished. But your uncle Bhishma shone transcending all those countless hosts in that fearful and terrible battle.”

“The twang of the bow-strings, the heavy tread of infantry, the furious neighing of horses, the falling of sticks and iron-hooks, the clash of weapons, the jingle of bells round the necks of elephants rushing upon one another, the clatter of the wheels of cars that resembled the roars of clouds, all these mingled together produced a hair-stirring uproar. All the Kuru warriors, reckless of their lives, rushed upon the Pandavas with cruel intentions. Taking up a fearful bow that resembled the rod of death, the son of Santanu, Bhishma, rushed upon the Pandavas. Arjuna also, taking up his bow Gandiva of wide-world fame, rushed upon the son of Ganga, Bhishma,

on the field of battle. Though mighty Bhishma pierced Arjuna with his arrows, yet he could not make him waver. The son of Pandu, Arjuna, also could not make him waver."

"The great bow-man Satyaki rushed against Kritavarma. The fight between these two heroes was extremely fearful and hair-stirring. Satyaki wounded Kritavarma and Kritavarma wounded Satyaki with loud shouts, and they thus weakened each other. Pierced all over the body with arrows, these two great warriors shone like two blossoming *Kinsukas** when they are adorned with flowers in Spring."

"The great bow-man Abhimanyu fought with Brihatvala, the ruler of Kosala,† who cut off the standard and overthrew the charioteer of the son of Subhadra. The king Judhisthira himself fought with the king of Madra who cut off his bow. Thereupon Judhisthira took up another stronger bow and called aloud to his adversary, "Wait." He then covered the king of Madra with a shower of arrows."

"Dhristadumna rushed upon Drona. In great

* *Kinsuka* is a tree which produces very red flowers.

† Kosala is modern Oudh.

anger Drona cut off the strong bow of the illustrious Panchala prince. He then shot a fearful arrow at him which was like the second rod of Yama. The arrow thus shot penetrated into the body of the prince. Taking up another bow and fourteen arrows, the son of Drupada then pierced Drona with them. Enraged with each other they fought on two mad bulls.*

“Thus in that battle thousands of single combats were fought between car-warriors, elephant-men horse-men, and foot-soldiers of both the armies. For a short time the battle looked beautiful, but it soon grew furious ; it became confused and fierce in the extreme.†

* It will be found that in this battle Krishna apparently took very little active part except giving advices to the Pandavas. But though unarmed and non-fighting, though he was but a charioteer in this great battle, yet he was in fact the central figure,—he was the axle round which the two wheels—namely the Kurus and the Pandavas,—rolled.

† Krishna was as great a master in the art of driving a chariot and looking after a horse as he was in arms or in learning. He was in fact a master in everything, in every art, in every science and in every learning. His most able charioteering saved Arjuna many times from imminent dangers. It made him more invincible and more powerful than he would have been with any other charioteer on his car. We need not quote instances of his able charioteering. It would be found all through these *Parvas*.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FIRST DAY'S BATTLE

THUS did the battle begin. The ancient chronicler then continues* :—

“The son did not recognise the father and the father the son ; the brother did not recognise his own brother, and the sister’s son did not recognise his maternal uncle ; the maternal uncle did not recognise his sister’s son, and the friend did not recognise his friend. The Pandava and the Kuru forces fought as if they had been possessed by demons. Some warriors attacked with their cars the cars of the enemies and crushed the yokes of those cars to pieces. The shafts of cars broke dashing against the shafts of other cars ; the spikes of car-yokes broke against the spikes of car-yokes. Some unitedly attacked others that were united ; but all were eager to take one another’s life. Some cars were obstructed by other cars, and they were

* We quote this long passage only to give our readers an idea of the mode in which battles were fought in ancient India. See Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, chapter XLVI

unable to move. Huge elephants with rent-temples fell upon other huge elephants. They angrily tore one another's body with their tusks. Others, again, attacking other impetuous and huge ones with huge standards on their backs, being wounded by tusks, roared in great agony. Disciplined by training and urged on by pikes and hooks, elephants not in rut attacked those that were in rut. Huge elephants, attacked by those that were in rut, ran away in all directions, uttering cries like those of cranes. Many huge elephants, well-trained and with juice trickling down from their rent-temples and mouth, having been wounded by swords, lances and arrows, shrieked aloud. Pierced in their vital parts, they fell down and expired uttering fearful cries. Some ran away in all directions."

"The foot-soldiers, that protected the elephants, that possessed broad chests, that were capable of effectually striking the foe, armed with pikes, bows, bright battle-axes, maces, clubs, arrows, lances, shafts and heavy iron-mounted bludgeons and swords of the brightest polish, ran in every direction with the firm resolve of taking one another's life. The swords of brave combatants, who rushed against one another, having been steeped in blood, shone

with great brilliancy. The whizing noise of the swords, made by their whirling and falling by heroic arms, became very loud."

"Crushed with maces and clubs, cut off with swords, pierced and ground by the tusks of elephants, the combatants sent forth heart-rending wails as those of men doomed to hell. Horse-men on fleet horses with tail like the plumes of swans rushed upon one another. Hurling by them, long, fleet and polished sharp-pointed darts, decked with gold, fell on all sides like so many snakes. Some heroic horse-men on fleet steeds leaped up and cut off the heads of car-warriors who were seated on their cars."

"Many infuriated elephants, adorned with gold trappings and looking like newly-risen clouds, threw down the horses and crushed them with their legs. Being struck on their frontal globes and flanks and mangled by lances, many elephants roared aloud in great agony. In the bewildering confusion of the *melee*, many elephants threw the steeds with their riders and crushed them down. Overthrowing with their tusks steeds and their riders, some elephants roved about and crushed cars with their standards. Some huge male

elephants, from excess of energy and with the temporal juice gushing down from their temples in large quantities, killed horses with their riders by their trunks and legs. Polished, sharp-pointed and fleet arrows resembling snakes fell upon the heads, the temples and the flanks and the limbs of elephants."

"Fearful and polished javelins resembling large meteoric flashes, being hurled by heroic arms, fell everywhere piercing through the bodies of men and horses and cutting through the coats of mail. Taking out their sharp swords from the sheaths made of leopard's and tiger's skins, many killed their adversaries in battle. Many warriors, though attacked and their bodies cut open, fell upon their antagonists with swords, shields and battle-axes. Some pierced by javelins, some cut down by battle-axes, some crushed by elephants, some trodden down by horses, some cut by the car-wheels and some by axes, loudly called for their kinsmen. Some called upon their sons, some upon their fathers, some upon their brothers, some upon their relatives, some upon their maternal uncles, some upon their sister's sons, and some upon their friends and others."

"A large number of combatants lost their weapons ; many had their thighs broken ; with arms torn off, or sides pierced or cut open, many were seen to cry piteously for the desire of life. Some, having but little strength and lying on the field of battle, asked for water from excessive thirst. Some, weltering in blood and becoming greatly weakened, censured themselves and abused your sons."

"There were some, who lying on the places where they lay, roared in anger ; and biting from wrath their own lips with their teeth, they looked at one another with faces rendered fearful by the contraction of their eye-brows. Others, possessing great strength and tenacity wounded with arrows, remained perfectly silent smarting under their pains. Other brave car-warriors, deprived of their own cars in battle and thrown down and wounded by huge elephants, cried to be taken up on the cars of others. In that fearful battle, destructive to heroes, the father killed the son and the son killed the father ; the sister's son killed the maternal uncle, the maternal uncle killed the sister's son ; friends killed friends and kinsmen killed kinsmen. Thus took place the great slaughter in that great battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas."

CHAPTER XXX

THE DEATH OF BHISMA

THUS day after day the battle was fought, and every evening the Pandava army retired to its camp defeated and mangled, crest-fallen and routed. There was no chance of victory so long the great Bhishma was alive. The Pandava army was dwindling down every day ; thousands and thousands had fallen. The Kuru army was full of ecstasy, and the Pandava camp had been filled with despair. Krishna knew that all this was due to Arjuna's half-heartedness in fighting with Bhishma. He found Arjuna did not fight with his grand-father as he should have done. He avoided him, and if he fought with him, he hardly ever seriously hurt him. There was none else in the Pandava army who could defeat or kill the great Kuru chief.*

* We believe this incident is based on fact. It is natural for Arjuna to fight with half-heartedness with his beloved grand-father, and it is also natural that Krishna should take some steps to incite Arjuna to kill Bhishma. What he did

If the old Patriarch was not killed, there was no hope for the Pandavas ; their army would be annihilated before great Bhishma would leave off his bow at the end of the tenth day of his generalship of the Kuru army. Krishna determined to make Arjuna fight with all his might and kill Bhishma, his grand-father though he be.

We shall once more quote the ancient chronicler. " Then seeing the great prowess of Bhishma and the mildness with which Arjuna fought, and also seeing that Bhishma was showering a continuous shower of arrows in the battle and that he was appearing like the all-consuming sun in the midst of the two armies, and marking also that the hero Bhishma was killing the foremost warriors of Yudhisthira's army and that he was making a great havoc amongst his troops as if the hour of dissolution had come, the exalted Krishna, that slayer of hostile heroes, that high-souled one, was unable to stand at what he saw. He thought that the army of Yudhisthira could not survive that slaughter ; for Bhishma was capable of destroying

was no doubt the best that could be possibly done under the circumstances to make Arjuna fight with all his might. See Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, Chapter LIN.

all the Daityas and Danavas in a single day ; with how much ease then could he kill the Pandavas with all their soldiers and followers !”

The vast army of the illustrious Pandava king began to fly away. The grand-son of Sini, Satyaki, saw Arjuna was surrounded by many thousands of horse and foot-soldiers and car-warriors and elephant-men. Having seen Krishna and Arjuna thus surrounded by infantry and elephants and horses and cars on all sides, that foremost of all wielders of arms, that chief of the Sinis, Satyaki, soon went to that place. That foremost of heroes, the Sini chief Satyaki, quickly rushed upon those troops and soon came to Arjuna's aid. He then thus addressed the troops of Judhishthira who were all frightened by Bhishma, and whose elephants, horses, cars and numberless standards had been mangled and broken to pieces, and who were all flying away from the battle-field. “O warriors, where do you go ? This is not the duty of virtuous men as declared by the ancients. O foremost of heroes, do not violate your pledges ; observe your own duties as heroes.”

“ Having seen that the troops of that foremost of kings were flying away from the field of battle

and having also marked the mildness with which Arjuna fought and seeing also that Bhishma was exerting himself with all his powers and that the Kurus were rushing from all sides, the illustrious protector of all the Dasarhas, Krishna, grew incapable of bearing it. He thus spoke to the famous grand-son of Sini, Satyaki. "O hero of the Sini race, those that are retreating, let them retreat. O Satwata chief, those that are staying, —let them also go away. I shall soon fell Bhishma down from his car, and Drona also, in this battle with all their followers."

"Having said this, the son of Basudeva, Krishna, threw off the reins of the horses and jumped down from the car. Whirling a chariot-wheel* with his right arm and making the earth tremble under his feet, the high-souled Krishna

* We have already told our readers that Krishna had a most formidable weapon which was called *Chakra*—a discus. Here it is narrated that he rushed upon Bhishma with a *Chakra*, but he was then unarmed and was mere a chrioteer of Arjuna ; it was not possible therefore that his *Chakra* (discus) would be near at hand and he would rush upon Bhishma with his this formidable weapon. *Chakra* also means a wheel. We believe he took up a broken wheel of a chariot from the battle-field, and armed with this he rushed upon the Kuru patriarch.

rushed with great force towards Bhishma. The end of his yellow garments waved in the air and looked like a cloud charged with lightning."

"Seeing that foremost of men, that divine personage advancing armed with discus Santanu's son, Bhishma, who stood on his car with his bow and arrows in hand," thus spoke, "Come,—come, O Lord of the gods, O Deity that has the universe for his abode, O God armed with mace, sword and Saranga bow, I bow to you. O Lord of the universe, forcibly fell me down from this excellent car. O Refuse of all creatures, O Krishna, if I be killed by you in this battle, great will be my good fortune both in this world and in the next."*

"Meanwhile jumping from his car, the greatest of all warriors, Arjuna, ran after the Yadu chief. He soon came to him and seized him with his two arms. That first of all men, Krishna, was dissembling rage. Therefore, though thus seized, he forcibly dragged Arjuna after him as a tempest carries away a tree. The high-souled Arjuna, however, seized his legs with great force as he was

* This shows with what great veneration Krishna was held by Bhishma. The incident is grand beyond all descriptions.

rushig towards Bhisma ; he succeeded in stopping him with great difficulty on the tenth step. When Krishna stopped, Arjuna, adorned with a beautiful golden garland, bowed to him, and he than thus spoke to him :—"Quell your wrath, O Keshava, you are the refuge of the Pandavas. O Keshava, I swear by my sons and brothers that I will not withdraw from the acts to which I have pledged myself. At your command, I will certainly annihilate the Kurus." Having heard that promise and pledge made by Arjuna, Krishna became gratified. He was ever engaged in doing what was agreeable to that foremost of the Kurus, Arjuna. He therefore, once more mounted on the car. That chastiser of foes once more took up the reins. Then taking up his conch, called Panchajanna, Krishna filled the sky and all the directions with its sound."

The aspect of the battle then changed.* Arjuna was Arjuna again. The battle raged most fearfully

* We have here rejected one incident being improbable and apparently fictitious. It is said that when it was found that it was not possible for the Pandavas to defeat or to kill Bhisma, Judhisthira, after consulting with Krishna, went to his grand-father Bhisma to ask how he could be killed. And

this is what Bhishma said :—" O son of Pandu, what you have said is indeed true. I am indeed incapable of being vanquished by the celestials and the Asuras united together with Indra at their head. If I lay aside my weapons, mighty car-warriors may then slay me. One who lays his weapons aside, one who is fallen, one whose armour and standard have been shattered, one who runs away, one who is panic stricken, one who says ' I am yours,' one who is a female, one who bears a feminine designation, one who is disabled, one who has got only one son, and one who is a mean fellow,— with these I do not fight. Hear also, O foremost of kings, about the vow that I have formerly taken. Beholding any inauspicious sign I would under no circumstance fight. That mighty car-warrior, O king, that son of Drupada, who belongs to your army, who is known under the name of Shikhandin, who is wrathful in battle, valiant and ever attended with victory, he was a female before, but afterwards attained to manhood. You all know how all this came to pass. Let the heroic Arjuna clad in mail placing Shikhandin in front of him assail me with exceedingly sharp arrows. Beholding then an inauspicious man in the person of him, who was female before, I will not strike, though I may be armed with arrow. Availing himself of that opportunity, let Pandu's son Dhananjaya quickly pierce me on all sides. Except the illustrious Krishna or Dhananjaya I do not find any one in the three worlds who can slay me in battle. Therefore let Arjuna armed with weapons and exerting in battle to the best of his abilities and wielding his excellent bow overthrow me in battle with arrows of various descriptions." See Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva, Chapter CVIII. slokas 75-78.

But it would be found later on that notwithstanding the presence of Shikhandin, Bhishma fought with Arjuna and did not leave off his arms, though of course he did not strike the Panchala prince Shikhandin. Mahavarata, Bhishma Parva,

between Arjuna and Bhishma ; and on the evening of the 10th day, the old patriarch of the Kuru race the greatest warrior of the age, the noble and good Bhishma fell. The ancient chronicler says :—
 “There was not even a space of two fingers in all his body that was not mangled with shafts. Thus your uncle, mangled with the keen-pointed darts shot by Arjuna, just little before sun-set fell down from his car on the field before the very eyes of your son.* Then at the overthrow of Bhishma, loud lamentations of “Alas!” and “O !” were heard among the kings. Beholding the illustrious grand-sire’s fall, they all became dejected and depressed at heart. That foremost of all bow-men, that mighty armed hero, fell like uprooted standard placed in honour of Indra, causing the

Chapter CXVIII. slokas 7-8 say :—“Shikhandin, speedily covered the grand-sire Bhishma with a shower of arrows. But disregarding those arrows, your sire Bhishma, wrought up with wrath, engaged to fight with Arjuna with innumerable shafts.”

This is not the only occasion where it is found that Bhishma fought with Arjuna and others notwithstanding the presence of Shikhandin. He did it many times over ; therefore this story is apparently a fiction. It was most probably added to the original story at some subsequent date in order to save Arjuna from the calumny of killing his own grand-father.

* This is told by Sanjaya to the old blind king. See Mahavarata Bhishma Parva, Chapter CXX.

earth to tremble. Covered with arrows, he did not touch the earth's surface. Then as that mighty bow-man, that foremost of all male beings, lay prostrate on his arrowy bed, he marked the sun to be then in the southern solstice ; and that hero, considering that hour to be inauspicious for paying his debt to Nature, did not allow his senses to depart. Then desirous of yielding his life up during the northern solstice, the grand-sire of the Kurus, Bhishma, though fallen on earth, still retained his vital breaths."

"When the grand-sire of the Kurus possessed of great strength, was overthrown, O foremost of the Bharatas, your sons knew not what to do. The Kurus grew totally confounded ; and Kripa and Durjodhana and others began to wail aloud. With their senses deprived in consequence of grief, they remained inert and did not think of fighting. They could not then rush against the Pandavas as if their thighs were locked. When that unslayable son of Santanu, Bhishma, endued with great prowess, was overthrown, O king, the destruction of the Kuru princes became apparent."*

* Though Bhishma fell, he did not then die. It is said he had the power of dying at pleasure. Finding that the sun was

then in the southern solstice, Bhishma did not give up his life, for to die at such a time was inauspicious. He waited for the northern solstice. He died many days after the end of the battle. At the conclusion of the war, the Pandavas went to pay their respects to the wounded hero and prayed to him to tell them something on religion, morals, statesmanship &c. The entire *Santi Parva*, the biggest Parva of the Mahavarata, contains Bhishma's teachings to the Pandavas. But this Parva can by no means be called a part of the original Mahavarata. It contains innumerable interpolations, or perhaps the whole of it is an interpolation. It might be called a great store-house of teachings, put in it by every sort of religious teachers, who made the celebrated Mahavarata, the medium to publish their views.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE DEATH OF ABHIMANYU

THE Kurus held a council of war ; and at the suggestion of Karna, Durjodhana appointed the venerable preceptor, the great Drona, as the generalissimo of his mighty army. The battle raged again,* and before the sun rolled that day down the horizon, the Pandavas with their army were fearfully mauled and routed to their camp. There was none in their army to withstand the onslaught of the great warrior Drona. If there were any, it was Arjuna ; but he studiously avoided his most beloved preceptor,—the man who made him what he was. And thus the Pandava army

* We shall no further quote any descriptions of this battle. They are mere so many repetitions,—descriptions of various single combats and hand-to-hand fights. We have already said, these Parvas of the Mahavarata describing the battle are the worst portions of this great work. They are full of contradictions and unnatural and hyperbolic accounts. Repetitions of the same descriptions run all through their pages, and in them we find the chief characters of the work, such as Krishna, Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Durjodhana, Bhishma, Drona, Karna and others, have been painted in a colour which is quite foreign, nay impossible, to their character. We shall point them out as we proceed.

met with a severe defeat and retired crest-fallen to its camp.

Next day it was known all over the two camps that the great Drona had promised to Durjodhana that he would hand over the Pandava king Judhishthira as a prisoner to the Kuru prince. The Pandavas were alarmed, but they were confident that so long Arjuna would be at Judhishthira's side, Drona, or for the matter of that, any other Kuru warrior, would never be able to capture the Pandava king. But to make the matter worse, a challenge came to Arjuna from the *Sansaptakas*, the great Gopa warriors, who had been trained by Krishna himself, who had constituted his invincible army and whom Krishna had given to Durjodhana to fight on his side, he having come to the Pandavas promising not to fight in this battle. Though Arjuna knew that the wicked Durjodhana had artfully made Krishna's warriors to challenge him to fight that day so that he might not remain by the side of Judhishthira to protect him, yet as a warrior, he had no other alternative ; he accepted the challenge.

The battle raged fierce and hot all through the day. Each of Krishna's Gopa warriors was as

powerful as perhaps he himself. It was, therefore, not a very easy task for Arjuna to defeat them and to hasten to his brother's protection. It was a great battle, and a wonderful battle that was fought that day. On the one side he alone, his charioteer being Krishna himself;—and on the other, hundreds of Gopa warriors, Krishna's most beloved friends, supporters and pupils. It was an extraordinary sight,—men that loved Krishna and Arjuna with all their heart did not hesitate that day to pierce them with the sharpest arrows, and Arjuna too cut them down without the least commiseration. And what did Krishna do? He looked at all this quite unconcerned. Who else could do it except he, and except the Man whom he paints in his wonderful Gita as the greatest model for the suffering humanity?

But here in his absence, Drona, Karna and other great Kuru warriors had put the Pandava army to rout. Thousands had been killed, and the rest were flying in all directions, panic-stricken. Drona had arranged his army in a fearful *Buha**

* *Buha* was a particular mode in which troops were arrayed in time of battle by a general. They were of various sorts, sometime being circular in shape, sometime semi-

which none of the Pandava heroes could break. It was Arjuna, and Arjuna only who had learnt from his preceptor Drona how to form it, how to enter it, how to get out of it and how to break it, but he had taught it only to his son Abhimanyu.

Finding no other escape, the Pandava king called the young prince Abhimanyu to his side and asked him to save his army in his father's absence by breaking the impenetrable *Buha* formed by the great preceptor. The young prince was only sixteen years of age, but he had grown to be even then as great a warrior as his father, for both Krishna and Arjuna had taken special pains to give him every possible training. But he had learnt as yet only how to enter the *Buha* formed by Drona ; he had not learnt how to get out of it. But he did not mind it. At the command of the king, he rushed towards the Kurus, committing fearful havocs in their ranks. Bhima, Dhristadumna and all other great Pandava warriors hastened after him to support him and to aid him in breaking the Kuru *Buha*.

circular, sometime square and so forth. The *Buha* formed this day by Drona was like a triangle ; there was only one opening to it at the point where the two sides of the triangle met.

A battle, the most fierce of its kind, was fought. Young Abhimanyu defeated all the Kuru warriors, routed their troops and entered the impenetrable *Buha*. Bhima and others attempted to follow him, but they were stopped by Jayadhrata* and was routed by Drona. Thus did the young hero find himself alone and unsupported within the impenetrable *Buha* of the Kurus, surrounded and hemmed in by thousands and thousands of the enemy.

But he was matchless in prowess and arms. He routed the Kuru troops and defeated all the great car-warriors who came to fight with him ; but he did not know how to come out of that great *Buha*, and therefore he had no other alternative but to fight on till his father would come to his rescue.

In the meanwhile the great Kuru warriors were all alarmed at the superhuman prowess and skill in arms of the young Pandu prince. They found that it was impossible for any of them to defeat this young lion of the Kuru race ; and if he

* Jayadhrata was the brother-in-law of Durjodhana. He was the ruler of Sindhu (modern Sind) and was a great warrior.

was not speedily defeated, none of the Kuru army would escape at his hand. They held a consultation ; and the great Kuru chiefs,—Vyasa is ashamed to narrate,—forgetting all rules of war and abandoning all morals and religion, unitedly attacked this young scion of their own race. Nothing could have been more shameful and scandalous in the eyes of the ancient Aryans than this attack upon one by many. But the Kurus in their despair forgot all codes of honour, and seven of their greatest car-warriors,—Drona, Karna and others, all—at one time and all unitedly, attacked the helpless and unsupported young hero. One cut off his charioteer, another his horses ; one his bow, another his shield ; one his armour, and another his arrows ; but still the invincible young prince fought on like a lion at bay. But how long could such unequal contest continue? Poor Abhimanyu fell,—to the greatest shame of the entire Kuru race ; and then somebody cut off his head.* The Kuru army did not feel shame to shout out with joy. The Pandavas were filled with the deepest grief. There was none who did

* It was done by the son of Dushasana.

not weep aloud crying "alas, alas !" They cried "Alas poor Uttara, and alas noble Subhadra !" But their anger was greater than their grief ; for they learnt how in an unjust fight the Kurus had killed their heroic boy by seven attacking one. They all eagerly waited for the return of Arjuna who was then engaged with the *Sansaptakas* and consequently did not know what great calamity had befallen his house. They all burnt with the bitterst vengeance, and they eagerly waited for Arjuna to lead them to inflict the severest punishment on the wicked and dishonest, renegade and treacherous Kurus for their cowardly conduct in murdering the boy, mighty Abhimanyu, the idol of the entire Pandava, Panchala, Birata and Yadu races.

* We need not say, Uttara, the beautiful princess of Birata, was the beloved wife of the young prince. She was only a year or two younger than Abhimanyu.

Subhadra was the mother of the young prince. Need we say that she was Krishna's sister and Arjuna's wife ? Both Uttara and Subhadra were the most beloved princesses in the royal house-hold of the Pandavas. There was none who did not love, respect and revere them with all their hearts. Beautiful Uttara was the airy, fairy moon-beam that played on that vast sea of warriors, and noble and heroic Subhadra with her motherly and sisterly love for all was the stream of ambrosia that flowed through the Pandava camp.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEATH OF DRONA

AFTER destroying the entire Gopa army,—the invincible *Sansaptakas*, the beloved friends, supporters and pupils of Krishna,—Arjuna retraced his steps towards the Pandava camp. It was evening ;—both the contending armies had retired to rest ;—but there was no joy, no merriment in the Pandava camp. The Kuru camp on the other hand was ablaze in innumerable bonfires ; it was rolling in ecstasy. The joyous shouts of the Kuru warriors were rending the sky.

Seeing the camp joyless and melancholy, Arjuna thus spoke to Krishna.* “O friend, no joyous trumpets sound to-day. The warriors, seeing me, all recede away. They do not tell me, as they do every day, of the great feats they have performed. O Krishna, is it all well with my brothers ? Is it well with the rulers of Panchala and Birata ? Why ever-cheerful Abhimanyu does

* See Mahavarata. Drona Parva, Chapter, LXXII.

not come to-day with his brothers to receive me with smiles? Seeing our men plunged in grief, my mind knows no peace !”

They entered the camp. They soon knew what had happened. Arjuna was overwhelmed with grief when he heard that his ever dear Abhimanyu was no more. To him Krishna coolly and calmly, and without a tear in his eyes, spoke these words of consolation.* “Do not, O Arjuna, thus yield to grief. This is the way of all brave heroes. Death is certain to the heroes that know not how to retreat. Undoubtedly Abhimanyu has gone to heaven. This is what is gained by all brave men. Abhimanyu, after killing innumerable heroes, has met with that glorious death which is coveted by all warriors. Do not grieve for him. Your brothers are plunged in grief ; comfort them in consoling words.”

Arjuna rose up, and in the hearing of all the camp took a solemn oath. “Truly do I swear,” said he, “I will kill Jayadrata to-morrow.† If

* Ibid.

† Jayadrata was at the gate of the *Buha* into which Abhimanya entered. It was he who prevented Bhima and others to enter the *Buha* and to go to the help of the heroic young prince.

to-morrow's sun sets without my killing him, I swear in the name of all that is holy that I will enter the blazing fire." The entire Pandava camp sent up a lion-like-roar ;—the Kurus started up and looked at one another in fear and awe.

But Krishna grew grave. He knew that the Kurus would soon come to know of the vow taken by Arjuna. They would make the most strenuous efforts to save Jayadhrata to-morrow. He knew it would not be at all easy for Arjuna to kill him before the sun would set next day, if the entire Kuru army determined to prevent it. And he knew also that if Arjuna failed to kill Jayadhrata, he would be sure to give up his life in a blazing fire. He therefore called his charioteer Daruka and spoke to him thus.* "O Daruka, in grief for the death of his son, Arjuna has vowed that before to-morrow's sun goes down, he will kill Jayadhrata. Hearing this, Durjodhana will assuredly take counsel with his advisers and take steps so that Arjuna may not be successful in his object. The life of Arjuna is in danger ; he must be saved any how. Therefore equip my car with all necessary weapons and follow me with it

* See Mahavarata, Drona Parva, Chapter LXXIX.

to-morrow. As soon as you hear the sound of my conch, bring it quick to me. If necessary I shall fight to-morrow and kill Jayadhrata to save Arjuna's life."*

He then went to Subhadra and consoled her thus,† "O sister, do not grieve; comfort your daughter-in-law. You know that all creatures have but one end ordained by *Kala*.‡ The end that your heroic son has met with fully becomes a hero of proud lineage as yours is. Do not therefore grieve. It is through a good luck that our brave Abhimanyu has met with an end ever coveted by heroes. He has gone to the eternal

* It is evident Krishna determined to fight next day and to help Arjuna to kill Jayadhrata. His this determination to fight goes in no way against his promise that he would not fight in the battle of Kurukshetra. The battle that would be fought next day was not the battle of Kurukshetra which was being fought for the kingdom of the Pandavas, — a battle in which only Krishna promised not to fight. But the issue of the battle that was to be fought next day was either the death of Jayadhrata or that of Arjuna, and not the winning of the Kuru kingdom. There was nothing therefore to prevent Krishna to take arms in such a battle. But our readers will find he had not to fight; for without his help Arjuna was able to kill Jayadhrata.

† See Mahavarata, Drona Parva, Chapter LXXVII.

‡ *Kala* is Time, — Death.

region reserved for the pious and the brave. You are the mother of a hero ; you are the wife of a hero ; you are the daughter of a hero ; O Subhadra, you are the kins-woman of heroes ; you should not grieve for the death of your son who has obtained the Supreme End by falling heroically fighting in a righteous battle."

The morning dawned ; the great battle began again. As expected the Kurus had made every possible arrangements to save Jayadhrata from the fearful arrows of the wrathful Arjuna. They had placed him at the end of a formidable *Buha* ; they had placed him at the end of the battle array, putting their greatest warriors at its various points. If Arjuna was to kill Jayadhrata that day, he had first to defeat the entire Kuru army with all its great warriors,—a task almost beyond all human prowess. But Arjuna supported as he was by Krishna, was equal to it.

The battle raged fierce and furious all day till just before sun-set Arjuna, after routing the entire Kuru army and defeating all its great warriors, cut down the head of the great Sindhu king.* The

* We must mention that some poetaster has made some embellishments in the description of Jayadhrata's death. He

Pandava army roared and danced in joy,—the Kurus retired crest-fallen and sad. The blood of brave Abhimanyu was avenged and Arjuna's vow was kept. Durjodhana lost all hopes of victory.

The next day the battle grew more fearful. It was the sixth day that the Kurus fought under the leadership of great Drona, and for these six days

writes that when Krishna found that it grew impossible for Arjuna to kill Jayadhrata, he covered the sun by his Discus, and thus it became evening. Seeing this, the Kurus brought out Jayadhrata in joy, when Krishna withdrew the Discus and Arjuna cut down his head.

He adds that Krishna then advised Arjuna to carry the head by the help of his arrows to the dense forest where sat Jayadhrata's father in deep meditation. It was ordained that when anyone would cut down Jayadhrata's head,—no sooner it would touch the ground than the head of that one would be severed. So Krishna advised Arjuna to carry the head to the forest and place it on the hand of the father. It was done. The head was placed on the palms of the father who was in deep meditation with closed eyes. He started up and threw it down. Immediately his head was cut off, and it fell on the ground.

These are evident fictions and after-additions. Any one who would take the trouble to read carefully the Mahavarata would come to the conclusion that these and other ridiculous descriptions were added to the Mahavarata when it was sung before the masses by songsters in order to make the story amusing. We need not say we have rejected all such descriptions.

the Kurus, if not victorious, were not defeated. But the Kuru preceptor Drona was too old to keep up his strength any longer in a fight which required more than superhuman energy. Daily did he grow fatigued and worn out. He found it no longer possible for him to continue the struggle. Neither was he willing to continue it. He therefore determined to die placing his soul at his last moment on the great unknowable Supreme One. He threw up his bow and arrows and concentrated his mind in Brahma. When he was thus meditating on God, the heroic Panchala prince Duistadumna jumped upon his chariot and cut off his head. The Kurus were struck with awe ; they loudly bewailed the fall of their great preceptor and retired to their camp weeping.*

* One extraordinary incident has been added in the description of the death of Drona. It is written that when Krishna found it impossible for the Pandavas to kill Drona, he advised them to leave the path of righteousness and kill Drona by a most shameful stratagem. He advised them to go and tell Drona that his son Ashwathama was killed. If he heard this, he would be overwhelmed with grief and he would surely give up arms when it would be easy to kill him. Arjuna flatly refused to do it, but Yudhishthira hesitatingly agreed ;—Bhima then killed an elephant named Ashwathama and went to Drona and told him that his son was dead. The

did Drona did not believe Bhima's word,—he would believe none except that embodiment of virtue Yudhisthira. So the Pandava king went and said, "Ashwathama was dead," adding in a low voice "Ashwathama the elephant." On hearing this, Drona left arms and Dhristadumna cut off his head.

Before proving without a shadow of doubt that this story is a palpable fiction, we would ask our readers that after reading what they have read in this humble work, are they prepared to believe that it was possible for Yudhisthira to tell a lie,—Yudhisthira who went to exile only to keep his word?—or for Krishna to advise it. Krishna who spoke the Gita? Is it possible for great Vyasa to go suddenly wrong as to make the characters of his great work assume such a changed appearance? Any one who has read the Mahavarata carefully will not believe it. It is as impossible for Bhima to be a coward, or Durjodhana to be humble, as for Yudhisthira to tell lies and Krishna to advise it. This story was subsequently added to save the great Panchala dynasty from the reproach of their prince having killed a Brahman,—an act which in later age became one of the greatest sins amongst the Hindus. Any one who will take the trouble to carefully read the Mahavarata will find that the story is clearly an after-addition.

We shall now state our reasons for rejecting the story:—
 (i) In the Mahavarata itself there are four different reasons given for Drona's giving up arms:—(a) the elephant incident *i.e.*, the false news of Ashwathama's death; (b) the words of the Rishis reproaching him for unnecessarily blanchering thousands of men; (c) Bhima's reproaches; (d) his fatigue for continually fighting for six days. The first is, as we have said, quite unnatural and impossible. The second is improbable, as it is not possible for the Rishis to be present in the thick of the fight; the third is not sufficiently

strong reasons for Drona's giving up arms, as abuses were as a matter of course hurled by the combatants in a fight, and Bhima had very little control over his tongue. We, therefore, accept the fourth as the only reason and the most rational reason for Drona's leaving arms. The others must therefore be after-additions.

(2) We reject the first *i.e.*, the elephant-incident, because we find that even after Judhisthira's saying that Ashwathama was dead, Drona still fought on. He did not even then leave off his arms. See Mahavarata, Drona Parva, Chapter CXCH. What was the necessity then of telling this lie ?

(3) It is written in the Mahavarata itself that Ashwathama obtained immortality by his asceticism. Drona was fully aware of it. It is not possible that he should take even Judhisthira's words as truth knowing full well that his son *could not die*. It is also impossible that a man like Krishna should advise to say something which was in the face of it could not be taken as true. It is also impossible that Drona would not ask anyone of his party to enquire whether Ashwathama was really dead or not. All this clearly indicates that this elephant-incident is a story afterwards added to save the Panchala prince from the sin of killing a Brahman.

(4) There are four places in the Mahavarata in which short accounts of the death of Drona are given, namely (a) *Anukramanika Adhyaya* *i.e.*, Introductory chapter, (b) *Parva Sangrahadhyaya* *i.e.*, chapter innumrating the Parvas, (c) chapters sixth and seventh of the Drona Parva, and (d) *Ashwamedhic Parva* where Krishna described the battle to his father. No where in any of these four accounts of Drona's death, it is said that he gave up arms on hearing from Judhisthira that his son was dead. Everywhere it is mentioned that he concentrated his mind in God when he grew fatigued in battle. If the story was in the original

Mahavarata, it would have been surely mentioned in all these places.

(5) After the death of Drona, there was a great quarrel amongst the Pandava chiefs (See Mahavarata, Drona Parva, Chaps. CXCVIII to CXCIX). Arjuna strongly reproached Yudhisthira for unjustly killing Drona. Bhima and Dhristadumna reproached Arjuna; Satyaki took Arjuna's part. Everything possible to be said was said by both the sides, but none said that Krishna had anything to do with Drona's death. If he had really induced Yudhisthira to speak the lies, he would surely not have escaped the reproach.

We believe our readers will now agree with us when we say that this elephant-incident is a palpable fiction afterwards added to the original story, and the real cause of Drona's death was his fatigue (which was originally Vyasa's version of the incident) and his great religious devotion, for which he gave up arms and concentrated his mind in God, determining to die instead of retiring from the field with ignomy and shame. It might be asked why this scandalous incident has been fastened on Krishna. It is very easy to explain. The answer would be, "because he was God, and to God, right or wrong, sin or virtue, are all alike, for nothing touches him." The poetaster who made these foolish embellishments over the descriptions of great Vyasa has fastened on Krishna all wrongful acts done on the Pandava side; for the poor fellow thought that he thereby saved the reputation of the Pandavas without doing any harm to anybody; for nobody would blame Krishna for anything, as he was the incarnation of God. Such writers have done the greatest possible injury to our great religion and great men.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DEATH OF KARNA

THOUGH two of the greatest warriors of the Kurus had fallen, yet proud Durjodhana had not given up all hopes of victory ; for still great Karna was alive, still he was by his side. It was he alone who could defeat Arjuna and destroy the Pandava army. With all pomp and grandeur, therefore, he installed Karna as the next generalissimo of his great army. Trumpets were sounded, conchs were blown ; the Kurus shouted with joy and enthusiasm. They believed victory was still on their side.

A most fearful battle was fought.* Arjuna had all along fought with half-heartedness. He never

* We have mentioned only the deaths of Bhishma, Abhimanyu, Drona, Karna and Durjodhana &c. But our readers must know these Parvas of the Mahavarata contain descriptions of the deaths of many other warriors belonging to both the armies. The evil genius of Durjodhana, Sakuni, was killed. The wicked Dushasana, the brother of Durjodhana, who dragged into the court the Panchala princess, the wife of the Pandavas, was killed just before the

exerted his powers to defeat his venerable grandfather and his most revered preceptor ; but now in the attempt to defeat and kill Karna, his rival in arms from the day he wielded the bow, he grew ten thousand times more mighty than he ever was. To defeat and to kill Karna was his life's object. That opportunity had at last come ; he rushed upon Karna like an enraged lion mad to taste blood. Great Karna too was as eager to defeat and kill Arjuna, his own younger brother,* as the Pandava hero was. The day had at last arrived when the world would see who was the greater warrior of the two,—Karna or Arjuna ? From the day when these two great warriors met each other in the Kuru tournament, when they

death of Karna. Irascible Bhima killed him and drunk his heart's blood, the vow he took when he saw Draupadi insulted by Dushasana in the open court. In fact before the fall of Karna, Durjodhana lost not only all his brothers, but almost all the great warriors, whereas none of note on the Pandava side was killed.

* Kunti the mother of the Pandavas, saw his eldest son Karna when battle was determined upon by the Pandavas and the Kurus. She prayed that Karna must not kill any of the five Pandavas. Karna promised to spare the lives of all except Arjuna. See Mahavarata. See also our note in Part I., pg. 112.

were but mere boys and were giving an exhibition of their skill in arms under the eye of the great preceptor, venerable Drona,—from that day each of these two heroes was cherishing secretly in his heart the desire to show to the world that he was the greater hero of the two. So Karna with the strongest desire to defeat Arjuna to-day made great king of Madra, Salya, his charioteer* and rushed to battle.

Never on the sanguinary field of Kurukshetra a more fearful battle was fought. None could withstand the fierce arrows hurled by great Karna which fell like a continuous shower of rain. The Panchalas fell fast,—the Pandava generals with all their exertion could not keep in order their great army. Karna mercilessly massacred their

* Salya was the king of Madra. He was the brother of Madri, the mother of the two younger Pandavas, Nakul and Sahadeva ; but he went over to the Kurus. When he was asked to be the charioteer of Karna, he took great offence, for the post of a charioteer was very derogatory to a royal prince. But our readers have seen Krishna gladly agreed to be Arjuna's charioteer when asked ; to him honour and dishonour, praise and blame were all alike. It is needless to say in ancient Indian war-fare a good charioteer was a great help to warrior. Salya was supposed to be only next to Krishna in the art of charioteership.

troops ; he routed them with no hopes of a rally.

All hope of victory was destroyed, and the king judhisthira precipitously fled from the field.

Bhima grinded his teeth in anger and asked Arjuna to follow the king and look to his safety. He told him not to be anxious for the battle ; victory was quite safe in his hand. Arjuna hesitated ; he did not like to leave the field at such a crisis ; but Krishna induced him to follow the Pandava king and see him safe in his camp. The real intention of Krishna, however, was to give Arjuna a little rest, so that he might face the great Karna fresh and strong when that great warrior would be fatigued and weak after fighting with all the other heroes of the Pandava army.*

* We are bound to mention that in Karna Parva of the Mahavarata Krishna gave Arjuna a long lecture on morality. We have not quoted this speech, because the incident which caused it appears to us an interpolation. It is mentioned that when Arjuna came to the camp to look after the safety of the king, Judhisthira, perhaps to hide his shame for flying from the field, strongly reprov'd Arjuna for leaving the battle, finally asking him to throw away his great bow *Gandiva*, as he was no longer worthy of wielding it. Now it was Arjuna's vow to kill the man who would ask him to throw away his *Gandiva*. Therefore he raised his sword to cut off

So did it happen. When Arjuna faced with full vigour the greatest warrior of the Kuru army, his own eldest brother, the great Karna of invincible arms, he found him worn out and fatigued after fighting with and defeating all the great warriors of the Pandava army. But proud Karna was not a man to turn his back from a challenging foe. He at once rushed upon Arjuna with the vigour of ten thousand mad elephants ; and it was only through the superhuman excellence of the charioteership of great Krishna that Arjuna's life was saved.*

Judhisthira's head. On seeing this Krishna read him a long lecture on morality. Arjuna submitted, and asked how he would be saved from violating his vow. Krishna advised him to abuse Judhisthira, for, he said, "the abuse of a younger brother to his elder is nothing but death to him."

The whole incident is in the face of it ridiculous. It is quite foreign to the character of Judhisthira to abuse Arjuna. It is quite ridiculous that Arjuna should have taken such a vow, or he should have ever attempted to kill his brother Judhisthira whom he followed like a shadow in weal and in woe. Some writer created this incident in order to put into the Mahavarata his own views on morality. He then placed his verses in the Karna Parva.

• It is mentioned in more than one place in these Parvas that the contending warriors used supernatural weapons. In the Drona Parva we find a great warrior named

The battle raged fierce and fearful. Two of the greatest warriors of the age exerted their utmost to defeat each other. They fought on as only they knew how to do it ; no pen can describe that fearful combat. At last one of the wheels of Karna's chariot suddenly stuck fast in the deep mud created by the blood of thousands of men killed on that most fearful day. He looked wild,—he grew helpless,—he jumped down from the car to get the wheel out of the mud. "Arjuna" cried he, "kindly excuse me only for a moment. You are well versed in all the rules of war. He who violates any of them commits a sin.* So long

Vagadatta hurling the *Vaisnava* weapon against Arjuna. When Krishna found that his friend failed to stop it, he himself covered him with his body, and then the weapon hang round his neck as a garland of flowers. There are mentions of *Sarpa* weapons, producing thousands of snakes, of *Varuna* weapons producing floods &c. &c. We need not say we have rejected them all as being supernatural, for we have nothing to do in this work with supernatural matters.

* The following men should not be attacked by a warrior. This was an inviolable rule in ancient India. (1) A man whose hair is unbound ; (2) a man who has turned his back ; (3) a man who prays to be spared with joined palms ; (4) a man who has asked for protection ; (5) one who prays ; (6) one who has laid aside his weapons ; (7) one who has no arrows ; (8) one whose armour is gone ;

unarmed I remain on the ground to get out the wheel of my chariot from the mud, kindly do not strike me. You are a son of a warrior—a warrior yourself ; remembering the path of righteousness, kindly wait for a moment.”

Unfortunately for Karna, he mentioned the path of righteousness in an evil moment. Motioning Arjuna to wait, Krishna thus reproved him. “O hero, you now remember the path of righteousness ! The low-minded men when afflicted with misery generally blame Providence ; they never look at their own wicked deeds. Where was your sense of virtue and righteousness when with your consent Durjodhana, Dushasana and Sakuni dragged into the open court Draupadi, the Panchala princess, clad in only one piece of cloth ? Where was your sense of righteousness when with your consent Sakuni deceitfully defeated in a game of dice Yudhisthira, who was not proficient in the play ? Where was your sense of righteousness when you allowed Durjodhana to set fire to the house of lac* in order to burn the Pandavas to death ? Where

{9} one who has lost his bow and ; {10} one who has his bow broken.

* See our note in Part I., pg. 113—114.

was your sense of righteousness when you seven great warriors surrounded the young boy Abhimanyu and murdered him forgetting all rules of war? O' Karna, when you have all along committed unrighteous acts, it does not behove you now to speak of the path of righteousness. The wicked and sinful sons of Dhritarastra with all their wicked advisers will surely perish at the hand of the ever virtuous Pandavas."*

Karna did not reply ; he had no face to reply. With one superhuman effort, he raised up the wheel of his chariot from the mud and leaped upon his car. Arjuna, at the motion of Krishna, stood quiet till Karna took up his bow and stringed his fearful arrows. The great combat began again, and the sky was covered with the arrows that the two invincible heroes hurled upon each other. They fought on till at last the great and mighty Karna, the right hand of the proud prince Durjodhana, the pillar of the Kuru empire, fell dead from his ever brilliant chariot. The Pandavas and the Panchalas sent up such a tremendous shout in joy that earth trembled as it were from

* See Mahavarata, Karna Parva, Chapter 91st. Krishna meant to say " Virtue would always triumph."

pole to pole. The Kurus fled away in alarm ; they ran in all directions ; and the great army of proud Durjodhana dwindled down for ever.*

* We have already said these Parvas are full of matters which are apparent interpolations. We have rejected them all, but we believe we are bound to mention at least one instance to give our readers some idea of them. In Drona Parva, Mahavarata, an account of a dream is given. It is said that Krishna and Arjuna went to the Himalayas and worshipped Siva. Though it is mentioned in the Vana Parva that Arjuna obtained the *Pashupat* weapon from Siva, yet here again it is narrated that he prayed for it and obtained it &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DEATH OF DURJODHANA

It is needless to say that Durjodhana lost all hopes of victory when great Karna fell. But though his old preceptor Kripa earnestly solicited him even then to make treaty with the Pandavas,* yet the proud Kuru prince did not listen to his sage advice ; he determined to fight on either to victory or to death. Next morning he appointed the king of Madra, the great warrior Salya, as the generalissimo of his army and advanced to give battle to his enemies.

Before the day far advanced, Salya fell at the hand of the Pandava king Yudhisthira. The Kuru army lost heart, the soldiers,—now reduced to only a few thousands from eleven *Akshauhini*s†—were seized with panic. They broke ranks and

* See Mahavarata, Salya Parva, chapter IV.

† It is said when the Kurus fled away, the Pandavas had only two thousand car-warriors, seven hundred elephants, five thousand horse-men and ten thousand infantry out of seven *Akshauhini*s. For *Akshauhini*s see our note in Part I., pg. 88.

fled away in all directions ; it was hopeless to make an attempt to rally them. The proud prince saw that his great army dwindled away before his very eyes. His face grew red, and then as pale as ashes. He lost all heart ; he jumped upon a horse and fled away from the field alone and unattended. The great battle was thus lost and won. The Kurus fled away towards Hastinapur pursued by the Panchalas. The Pandavas took possession of the Kuru camp cheering vociferously for their great victory.*

Proud Durjodhana rode as fast as his horse could carry him to the outskirts of an extensive forest. He then got down from the horse, and with his club on his shoulder he walked into the forest till he came to a lake. There he took his seat determining never again to show his face to any human being.†

But the Pandavas were in hot pursuit. They searched every place where he could possibly lay

* See Mahavarata, Salya Parva, chapter xxxix.

† It is mentioned that Durjodhana lay hidden underneath the water of a lake. As it is not possible for a human being to live at the bottom of a lake, we have rejected this story. Possibly it is only an allegory.

hidden, but all their search proved fruitless. They at last got information from some hunters that he was hiding himself in the forest. They all hastened towards it and soon came to his track. But they could not find out his hiding place. Therefore the Pandava king, raising his voice high, cried, "O Durjodhana, you are a disgrace to our race. Being a warrior, are you afraid to fight? Come out and fight with us. If you kill any of us, I shall give up all claim over the kingdom and go back to the forest. Fight and win the kingdom, or win heaven by falling in a fair fight."

"Yes," said the proudest of the proud, Durjodhana, coming out from his hiding place, "I shall fight with all of you and revenge the death of Bhishma, Drona, Karna and my brothers. But I shall no longer fight for the kingdom. I bestow it upon you as a gift. Rule over a kingdom which is now a desert. Such kingdoms are not to be ruled by Durjodhana!"

"O Durjodhana," said Yudhishthira, "I shall not accept the kingdom as a gift from you. I again say, come and fight with us. If you can kill any of us, your kingdom will be yours,—we shall again go back to the forest."

"Well," replied Durjodhana, "I shall fight with my club. Who is equal to me in club-fight? I shall not condescend to fight with such insignificant club-fighters as you or Arjuna. I shall therefore fight with Bhima and shall send him to Yama's abode."*

They fought like two mad elephants. Both possessed herculean strength and wonderful skill in using the club. They fought on till at last Bhima finding an opportunity hit with his club the thigh of the Kuru prince. The club fell on it like a thunder-bolt and smashed it to atoms. Proud Durjodhana fell on the ground and fainted away.†

* We give the conversation in brief. See Mahavarata, Salya Parva, chapter 31st.

† An apparent interpolation is here made. It is mentioned that when the Pandavas saw that it was not possible to kill Durjodhana in a fair fight, Krishna asked Arjuna to give a hint to Bhima to kill the Kuru prince by an unfair means. Arjuna at once slapped his thigh as if to encourage Bhima, but in reality to suggest to Bhima to strike at the thigh of Durjodhana. According to the rules of war, it was unfair to strike below the navel of a warrior,—it was therefore most unfair for Bhima to hit the Kuru prince at the thigh, but he did it, for he vowed to do it when in the open court Durjodhana slapped his thighs and asked Draupadi to sit on them,—a vow which he forgot, but remembered at the hint given by Arjuna. The reason why

Then did Bhima again and again kick at the head of the dying Kuru prince. "O villain," said he, "now take this for the insult you offered to the Panchala princess in the open court." King Judhisthira came forward and reproved Bhima for his conduct. "O hero," said he, "you should not kick at the head of this prince. He is a king, he

we say this story is an interpolation is that it is quite against the characters so long described by the great Vyasa. The great chronicler himself wrote, "Where is Krishna, there is Virtue. Where is Virtue, there is Victory." It is not at all possible that Krishna of all men who always asked the Pandavas to tread on the path of virtue would now ask them to kill a man by an unfair means. Is it possible that Arjuna who reproached Dhristadumna for killing the preceptor when he was meditating on God,—Arjuna than whom there was none who observed all the rules of war, now so far forgot himself as to induce Bhima to kill the Kuru king by a most unfair way? Is it also possible that Bhima would ever forget his fearful vow? He vowed that he would drink the heart's blood of Dushasana; and he did it without any hint from anybody. Would he require any hint from anybody now to strike at the thigh of Durjodhana? He knew full well when he vowed to do it that it was not fair and it was against all the established rules of war; but still he took the vow, and now he kept it. He surely required no hint from anybody; his idea of morals was not so high as that of Arjuna or Judhisthira.

Our readers may ask, why then this story is at all created? We would refer them for the answer to our note re the death of Drona.

is our relative,—you should not treat him in this way as he is now wounded and fallen.”

Finding that the Panchalas were hurling cruel words to the fallen Durjodhana, Krishna said, “It is not proper to tease with cruel words a fallen enemy. He has met with the fate he deserved. Let us now return to our camp.”*

The Pandavas and the Panchalas came back to the field of Kurukshetra and Yudhishthira asked Krishna to go to Hastinapur to console the old blind king Dhritarastra and his queen Gandhari. But consolation had no place in Hastinapur. From every house rose heart-rending lamentations of bereaved women who wept aloud at the loss of their husbands, sons, brothers or fathers. There was no joy in the victory that the Pandavas gained. Their cheers soon ceased,—their hearts grew damped, and when thousands of women came weeping on the field of battle to find out the dead bodies of their dear ones, tears rolled down the cheeks of every man.

The little joy that lay in the deep recesses of their heart was also destroyed next day. On the

* See Mahavarata, Salya Parva, chapter 59th.

night following the day in which Durjodhana fell, Ashwathama, burning with mad revenge, stealthily entered the Pandava camp and murdered in their sleep the five sons of Draupadi, the two Panchala princes, Dhristadumna and Shikhandin, and many others.* The five Pandava brothers escaped only because fortunately they did not sleep in the camp on that fatal night.† When morning broke and when the fearful massacre was discovered,‡ the whole camp was filled with loud lamentations.

* It is mentioned that when dying, Durjodhana made Ashwathama the next generalissimo of his broken down army. The new commander, having no army to command, stealthily entered the Pandava camp and wrecked his vengeance by murdering the sleeping men.

It is further mentioned that when these foul murders were discovered, the Pandavas sought for Ashwathama in every direction. When they came upon him, he, finding no other escape, hurled the *Bramhasira* weapon against the Pandavas. This *Bramhasira* weapon was an extraordinary thing. Though it failed to do any harm to the five Pandavas, yet it struck at the child that was in Uttara's womb.

We need not say all these are after-additions. See *Sauptika Parva, Mahavarata*.

† It is mentioned that Krishna asked the Pandavas to pass that night in some place outside the camp, for, he said, it would be auspicious.

‡ After the description of the fall of Durjodhana, all that is found in the *Salya Parva* of the *Mahavarata* are apparent

interpolations. If our readers take the trouble to read this portion of the Mahavarata, they will find that Durjodhana charged Krishna with all the wicked acts performed in the battle,—all his charges being based on untruth. Then they will find Krishna, who reproved others for using cruel words to a dying foe, hurling foulest abuses on the dying Durjodhana. Then they will find that Durjodhana who is described all through the Mahavarata as the wickedest of the wicked going to heaven in a celestial chariot &c. Is there any one who would take these descriptions to be penned by the great poet Vyasa ?

CHAPTER XXXV

THE PANDAVAS AT HASTINAPUR

THE battle was over.* The great kingdom of Hastinapur had been flooded with the tears of orphans and widows. The Kurus that had survived the fearful battle fled away in all directions from the fear of the vengeance of their hereditary foes the Panchalas.† The once-smiling and prosperous

* This chapter is culled from no less than five Parvas of the Mahavarata, namely *Stree Parva*, *Santi Parva*, *Anushasana Parva*, *Ashvamedha Parva* and *Asrambika Parva*. We have mentioned here only that which appears to us based on historical facts. There are two incidents in the *Stree Parva* in connection with Krishna, both of which we have rejected. It is narrated that the blind Dhritarastra with the intention of killing Bhima desired to embrace him. Suspecting his intention, Krishna made an iron Bhima and gave it to him to embrace. The story in the face of it is ridiculous.

The other incident is about Gandhari's curse on Krishna. When Krishna went to console her, she cursed him saying that his family and he himself would be destroyed by an internal dispute.

† Our readers are already aware that the Panchalas were born enemies of the Kurus. They showed no mercy to them when they were routed. See Mahavarata, *Salya Parva*.

kingdom of Kurujangala had turned into a fearful desert.

Judhisthira wept and shed bitter tears. His soft and ever gentle heart bled at the thought of the most lamentable plight to which he had brought the ever-glorious kingdom of his forefathers. He called Arjuna and his other brothers and said that he was unable to live in such a kingdom amidst such a fearful weeping ; he would go back to the forest and live away from all pomp and grandeur. It was far more preferable to live on alms than to have the sovereignty of such a desert empire. Arjuna, Bhima, Draupadi and every one else attempted to console him and to induce him to go to Hastinapur and to assume the sovereignty ; but the gentle-hearted Pandava king put a deaf ear to all their entreaties ; he said he would go to the forest to make propitiation for the great sin he had committed by killing his kinsmen and friends.*

At last the great Vrisni prince, the guiding spirit of the Pandavas, Krishna, spoke.† At his word the weak-minded Judhisthira got heart. He

* The speeches of Arjuna and others are too long to be quoted.

† We do not think it necessary to quote Krishna's speech.

then in great solemnity and grandeur entered the city of Hastinapur where he was in due form installed on the ancient throne of the great Kurus as the king of all the kings of the Aryan lands.*

Krishna then asked the Pandava king to wait upon the old patriarch of the Kuru race, the venerable Bhishma, who was then lying wounded, waiting for the auspicious northern solstice to give up his soul to God. He asked Yudhishthira to learn from the dying hero all that ought to be learnt by a king about religion, morals, statesmanship, diplomacy, politics and domestic life ; for he said, "Bhishma is the great store-house of all learning and wisdom. When he dies, — with him will die all learning and wisdom that he has acquired all through his long, virtuous and glorious life. Therefore, O sire, learn from him all that ought to be learnt to make your people happy."†

The Pandava king with all his brothers,

* Thus did Krishna, making the most virtuous king the sovereign of all India, established the Kingdom of Righteousness in the world.

† Thus did Krishna, making Bhishma the spokesman, declared to the world all rules, — you may call all legislation, — to be observed as regards morality, religion, statesmanship domestic life &c. &c.

ministers and relatives went to the place where lay on a bed of arrows the great patriarch of the Kuru race. They all bowed down their heads to him ; they touched his feet in token of the great veneration that they bore for him. Old Bhishma blessed them each individually by touching their heads with his now feeble but once most powerful hand.

When the Pandavas took their seat round the old Kuru chief, Krishna thus spoke to him with all due respects. "You are old in age, you are vastly learned in the *Sastras*, you are pure and holy. The duties of a king as well as everything else are all known to you. Not a fault has ever touched you from your birth. All the kings call you learned in all the *Dharmas* ;* therefore like a father teach these kings morals, religion, statesmanship and all else that they ought to know."†

"O Lord," replied Bhishma, "You are the source of all *Dharmas* and *Karmas*.‡ You know everything. Teach Yudhishthira and the Pandavas all

* Here *Dharma* means "morality, religion, duty, statesmanship &c. See our note in Part I.

† See Mahavarata, Santi Parva.

‡ See our note in Part I.

that they ought to know. I am in my death-bed and my memory is failing."

Krishna repeatedly pressed him; the Pandavas and the others entreated him with joined hands: all cried, "Glory be unto Bhishma, the great and the good!"

Thus pressed, Bhishma slowly began to deliver his wonderful teachings,—teachings on religion, morality, statesmanship, domestic life and on everything else that a man ought to know. He talked on till his breaths failed, and the auspicious northern solstice, having appeared, he placed his soul on God and breathed his last.*

Judhisthira was overwhelmed with grief. Bhishma was a father to him from his childhood, and at his death he knew not consolation. He wept aloud like a child falling at the feet of the dead patriarch. What pleasures and happiness were there for him when all that were dear and near to him were gone! He resolved to retire from the world and pass his life in the solitude of a forest. Everyone attempted to console him, but he knew no consolation.

* See our note in Part I.

Again Krishna spoke. "O king," said he, "you have not been able as yet to destroy all your enemies. Do you not see that there lives within your body a great enemy called *Ahankara*?"* He then told him an allegorical story, showing how this great enemy of man, this *Ego*, this Pride for Self, could be destroyed.† He then advised him to perform great sacrifices such as *Ashwamedha* and others.‡

Judhisthira did not retire into a forest; he ascended the throne of Hastinapur and began to

* The word *Ahankara* is very difficult to be translated into English. It means the "Consciousness of Ego" "I do this; I did that," this sense of pride of *I* or *Self* is *Ahankara*.

† This speech of Krishna is a long one. It is known by the name of *Kama Gita*. As the Gita covers all the teachings of Srikrishna, we do not think it necessary to quote this *Kama Gita* in *extenso*.

‡ We believe except Krishna none would have been able to diagnose the *disease* that was in Judhisthira's heart. Surely it was nothing else but *Ahankara*, the sense of Pride for Self, which made him think that *he* caused the battle and killed his relatives and friends. This excessive sense of Pride of Self—made him weep and desire to go to exile.

Perhaps except Krishna none would have been able to prescribe the proper remedy for this fell disease. Krishna asked him to perform great sacrifices, the pomp and grandeur of which he knew will satisfy this Pride of Self.

make preparations to perform the great *Ashwamedha* sacrifice with all pomp and grandeur.*

In the meanwhile Krishna with the permission of the Pandavas went back to his own city of Dwarka.† He took with him his sister Subhadra who was silently pining away at the loss of her only child,—the most beloved boy that ever wielded a bow.‡

A few months after Krishna with many other Yadu chiefs once more came to Hastinapur to be present at the *Ashwamedha* sacrifice of the king Yudhisthira. When he arrived, there was no joy and merriment in the palace of the Pandavas; loud lamentations were heard from every side; Uttara, the widowed princess, had given birth to a dead child,—the child who was the only hope of the Pandavas. He was to continue their dynasty; with his death the great Kuru dynasty became extinct.

* Here three big works have been added to the Mahavarata in the name of Krishna, namely *Anu Gita*, *Sanatsu Gita* and *Brahman Gita*. See Telang's *Gita*.

† There are some ridiculous stories narrated in connection with Krishna's journey to Dwarka. We reject them.

‡ When Krishna arrived at Dwarka, he briefly narrated what had taken place in the battle.

As soon as Draupadi and Subhadra heard of the arrival of Krishna, they ran towards him, they fell at his feet, they wept aloud ; they entreated him, they prayed to him to revive the child. None could withhold tears at their heart-rending lamentations.

Krishna consoled them by saying, "Yes, I shall revive the child ;" and he then went to the place where sat poor Uttara,—a mere child herself,—bemoaning over the corpse of her dead child. When she saw Krishna, she burst out into loud lamentations. She fell at his feet ; she wept crying, "O sire, I shall kill myself if my child does not revive "

Krishna took up the child on his lap and said, "I have never told a lie in my life ; I have never retired from a battle ; if I have obtained any virtue by my these acts, let this child revive by that virtue. As virtue and piety are beloved to me, so was my boy Abhimanyu. Therefore let this child revive. I have never quarrelled with Arjuna, therefore let this child revive. Virtue and truth always stay in me, therefore let this child revive."

Gradually and slowly did the child revive to

the joy of his mother and grand-mothers, to the joy of the Pandavas and the whole populace of Hastinapur.*

The great *Ashwamedha* sacrifice was solemnised with all pomp. The royal guests of the Pandavas went away to their respective kingdoms; Krishna also came back to his own city. He bade the Pandavas a loving farewell, and it was his last farewell to his beloved friends and relatives.†

* Our readers are aware that Krishna was a master in the healing art. See Part I, pg. 75—76.

† We believe the original Mahavarta ended with the birth of the child of Uttara who was named Parikshita and who ultimately ascended the throne of Hastinapur. But the present Mahavarata contains three more Parvas. We shall have something to do with them later on.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE LAST DAYS OF SRIKRISHNA

THUS establishing the kingdom of Righteousness in the world,* Krishna retired to his own city of Dwarka and lived there for many years† a life of peace, happiness and pleasure,—a life which only he knew what it was.‡

Thus passed many years till at last a fearful dissension arose amongst the Yadus.§ They were

* Our readers have seen that Krishna caused to be removed all the tyrants from the face of the earth. All the vicious and the wicked were killed and a most virtuous king was placed on the throne of the Aryan land thereby making all the people happy and comfortable. He then through old Bhishma declared to the world all the rules of domestic life, morality, statesmanship and religion. He himself declared to the suffering humanity the loftiest religion ever preached, thus pointing to mankind the path of eternal bliss. Thus the kingdom of Righteousness was established and his work was done.

† It is mentioned he died thirty six years after the battle of Kurukshetra.

‡ It is impossible to say what he really was. His life is beyond our conception.

§ The history of the last days of Śrīkrishna is more vague and meagre than even that of his early days. It is evident

of many clans, ever fighting and quarrelling amongst themselves.*

It was the great personality of Srikrishna that kept them in check and prevented them from flaying at one another's throats.

They were ever proud and vain. The great and high position that their Krishna held in India made them prouder and vainer. They cared none; they bullied all; they daily grew more vicious, wicked and tyrannical.† For the sake of great Krishna none uttered a word of complaint against them; people suffered their tyranny in

that the original Mahavatata ended with the birth of Parikshita,—but there are three Parvas to be found in the present Mahavarata which narrate subsequent events that took place after the birth of this Pandu prince. One of them, namely the *Mushala Parva*, deals with the history of Srikrishna as regards the last day's of his life. What this *Mushala Parva* narrates has also been narrated by the Puranas and Harivansa. This is the only incident that has been narrated by the Mahavarata as well as by the Puranas. We have already said in Part I. (See pg. 96) that the accounts of Srikrishna as given by the Puranas are full of fictions and fables. This *Mushala Parva* is no exception.

* See our note in Part I. pg. 99.

† They became so much addicted to drink that their chief proclaimed that capital sentence would be passed on all those who would touch liquor. See Mahavarata. *Mushala Parva*, chapter I.

silence. Though Krishna had removed all the wicked and the vicious from the face of the earth, yet his own people, the Yadus, grew more wicked and sinful than any of them ever was.

His work was not done yet ; he asked them to go to the holy Pravasa*, and there to pass some days in religious performances ; for at this time various evil omens were seen in Dwarka.†

The different clans of the Yadu race all accompanied Srikrishna with the greatest pomp and grandeur to the sacred coast of the dark blue sea, there to bathe and to perform religious rites, to amuse and to make merry.‡ Only the women, the children and the old men were left behind.

They made themselves merry in various ways ; they drank to their fill. They then quarrelled amongst themselves and rose against one another.§ A great battle was fought on that holy

* Pravasa is near Porebander in Guzrat.

† It is mentioned that various evil omens were seen in Dwarka at this time. See Mahavarata. Mushala Parva, chapter II.

‡ They carried many hundred casks of liquor with them. See Vishnu Purana, Part IV., Mahavarata, Mushala Parva.

§ It is said that Satyaki reproved Kcitavarma for his helping Ashwathama in his night massacre. Pradumna,

shrine, the sacred Pravasa, and the entire Yadu race was destroyed.* Only four were left alive, namely Krishna, his brother Balarama, his charioteer Daruka and one Yadu chief named Bavru. After the battle Balarama quietly went to the sea and there gave up his life.

the son of Krishna, took Satyaki's part. Then Satyaki cut off Kritavarina's head. Kritavarina's men then killed Pradumna. Thus a general fight began.

* A most absurd story has been told in all the Puranas and the Mahavarata in connection with the destruction of the Yadu race. It is said that one day some of the Yadus made fun with three great Rishis. They dressed Samba, one of the sons of Krishna, in a female attire and taking him to the Rishis, asked them what child the supposed woman would give birth. The Rishis at once knew what mischievous pranks the impudent Yadus were playing. They grew tearfully angry and cursed them saying that an iron bar would be produced from the womb of the woman and this bar would destroy the entire Yadu race. The Yadus were alarmed, they all hastened to Krishna and told him what had happened. He advised them to take the iron bar to the sea and rub it to ores and thus wash it away. It was done. It was then added that from these iron ores were produced innumerable long grasses, which were used as weapons by the Yadus when they fought at Pravasa.

Should we say this story is one of the many that was added by the songsters to make the Mahavarata amusing to the masses? When this happened Samba was more than fifty years of age. Is it possible for a man of his age to play such pranks?

Krishna then sent Daruka to Hastinapur to inform the Pandavas what had happened and to ask Arjuna to come to Dwarka and to look after the women and children of the Yadu race. He then went back to Dwarka, consoled the weeping women and children and asked them to wait till Arjuna would come. He advised them to go with the Pandava prince to Hastinapur and leave Dwarka to be engulfed by the sea.* He then bidding them all a loving farewell left his beloved city for ever and retired into the deepest forest.

Arjuna hastened to Dwarka as soon as he heard what great calamity had befallen the Yadus. He took with him the remnant of the great Yadu race, the weeping children, women and old men to Hastinapur, and installed the only grandson of Srikrishna, the five years old prince Bazra† on the throne of Surasenaka, the ancient kingdom of the Yadu race.‡

* It is mentioned that as soon as the Yadu women and children left Dwarka, it was immediately engulfed by the sea.

† Krishna's son was Pradumna; Pradumna's son was Annirudha, and Annirudha's son was Bazra. It is mentioned Krishna gave up his life at the age of one hundred and twenty five years.

‡ Many absurd stories are here told. We reject them

Srikrishna, the unknowable, lived in the forest, we do not know for how many years. When the proper time came, he went away from this world,*—to come back again when it would be necessary to do it for the good of the suffering humanity.† Such is the great love He bears for mankind !

Glory be unto Him:—and glory be unto us that we are his creatures,—nay each of Us is His own Great Self !

all. We believe we must mention here that after the accension of Srikrishna the Pandavas installed their grandson Parikshit on the throne, and retired into the Himalayas.

* It is mentioned that when Srikrishna was engaged in deep meditation in the forest, a hunter named *Jara* by mistake shot an arrow at his feet, and this caused his death. This story is evidently an allegory. *Jara* means old age. The story clearly means that he died of "old age."

† See his own words in the Gita.

FINIS

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SOME OPINIONS.

An Extract from a letter dated Baroda, 26th Nov. 1903, from the Vidyadhar to His Highness The Maharaja Gaikwar of Baroda, G. C. S. I.

"His Highness the Maharaja Saheb has been graciously pleased to order by No. 14 dated the 21st instant that Rupees One Thousand and Five Hundred be paid to you as patronage from His Highness to your useful work."

The great Chinese Lady Kung Tung Tbac, the daughter of the Maker of Modern China, writes :—

"My father is very glad to have such a nice book (Srikrishna—His Life and Teachings) and he also thinks with me, all the Indian religions collected thereto."

His Honour the late Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir John Woodburn, M.A., K.C.S.I., writes :—

"Your book (Srikrishna) is an interesting one, excellently written."

The great Indian Scholar. The Hon'ble Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, M.A., Ph.D., M.R.A.S., C.I.E., writes :—

"Your book is very readable. It will prove highly useful."

The Member of the Madras Government, H. H. The Maharaja of Bobbili, K.C.I.E., in his work "Advice to the Indian Aristocracy" writes :—

"I strongly recommend his (Dhirendra Nath Pal's) book on Srikrishna—His Life and Teachings—to you all and advise you to read it from the beginning to the end."

Dr. A. F. R. Hørnley, in writing a letter to Pandit Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri, M.A., Late Principal of Sanskrit College, says :—

“ Please give my best thanks to your friend Mr. Dharendra Nath Pal for his work on Srikrishna. He intends to prove him to be a historical personage. This is a great undertaking, and I wish him all success.”

Our great Bengalee poet, Baboo Nabin Chandra Sen, writes :—

“ In erudition, reason, ability and mastery over the English language, it can compare with the very best production of our countrymen. It is destined to have a religious and political significance all the world over.”

Dr. W. L. Wilmhurst, in the Hibbert Journal, Oct. 1907, writes :—

“ The ideal which Jesus Christ held up to his followers is essentially the same as that which Krishna proposed to Arjuna.”

“ The Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Krishna have in fact the same aim which underlies the highest forms of religion in all lands and in all ages.”



